

# ITALIA!

Issue 132 November 2015 £4.40

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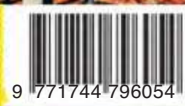
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# Welcome!



The one Italian city my wife insists we return to time and again is Venice. She doesn't have to twist any arms... The Floating City is a place that, no matter how many times you visit, there's always something new to see and do. I love exploring the back streets of the old city. I love the markets (especially the Rialto

fish market that's apparently been in existence for seven centuries), and there's a bar just down the road from our favourite hotel where the piano is played, bottles of prosecco are opened with a sword and everyone enjoys themselves until late into the night. We have our favourite places, but we are always willing to push out and explore. And so should you. To that end, in this issue, starting on page 48, we explore the 'new' Venice. Right across the city new hotels and developments are springing up, or, at least, re-inventing old buildings in much need of some TLC. The city may be slowly sinking, but there's plenty of life in her yet!

Elsewhere in this issue we explore your opportunities to create an Italian home that's unique to you by buying a restoration project (from page 20); we visit the beautiful gardens around Lake Como and Lake Maggiore (page 73); we take a (tongue-in-cheek) look at what it takes to venture onto the Italian roads in a car (page 41); and we present you with our usual collection of fantastic recipes, wine reviews, news and events. Do enjoy the issue!

*Paul P.*

**Paul Pettengale** Editor

*PS Italia's brand new guide to Rome & the South is on sale now (£7.99). Visit [www.italytravelandlife.com/italiaguides](http://www.italytravelandlife.com/italiaguides) for details.*

## SUBSCRIBE TO ITALIA!

Subscribe to *Italia!* for our exclusive Christmas book offer\* and get the magazine delivered directly to your door every month! Turn to page 30 for more information.

Photo: Saggio VII.



*The New Venice, page 32*

**AWARD WINNER!**  
The Italian Tourist Board voted *Italia!* the 'Best Overall Publication 2011'



## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



**ADRIAN MOURBY** visits Venice on a very regular basis. You could almost call it his second home... In this issue he reveals his pick of the new hotels that are being developed across the city (page 48), and he visits an old friend who's been working in the same bar for 37 years, who is also often visited by a very famous face (page 32).



**FLEUR KINSON** reckons that one of the cheapest ways of getting onto the Italian property market is to buy a tumbledown wreck and redevelop it yourself (with local help, of course). The end-result will be a house that fits you and your lifestyle, and could be a serious investment opportunity for the future. Turn to page 20.



**SARAH LINDSAY** has been working with us here at *Italia!* since the very first issue back in 2004. For this issue she travelled with her husband Dave and her two young sons to the Adler Thermae Spa in Tuscany for a bit of R&R. Can you really relax with kids on board? Find out how she and Dave got on in her feature starting on page 57.





64



32 20



# IN THIS ISSUE

## November 2015



73

### PROPERTY

#### 20 HOMES FOR RESTORATION

For many buyers in Italy, transforming an old tumbledown property is the ultimate dream. **Fleur Kinson** gets you started.

#### 54 PROPERTY FOCUS: THE NORTH

From lakes and mountains to seaside and some of Europe's best wine regions, the north of Italy has something for everyone.

#### 72 BUILDING THE DREAM

**Jane Smith** and her husband Richard prepare their high-traffic outdoor areas for purpose.



82

### HOLIDAYS

#### 32 MEETING WALTER

Walter Bolzonella has worked at the Cipriani for 37 years. **Adrian Mourby** goes to visit.

#### 41 DRIVING, THRIVING AND SURVIVING

We present **Gordon Craigie's** Top 10 Italian Driving Habits.

#### 48 48 HOURS IN THE NEW VENICE

**Adrian Mourby** makes a tour of some of the new hotels that have sprung up recently.

#### 57 ADLER THERMAE

**Sarah Lindsay** takes the family to the Adler Thermae spa resort in Tuscany.

### CULTURE

#### 38 FAST ART

Showing his true colours – **Freya Middleton** on the work of Luca della Robbia.

#### 64 THE JEWELLED LADY

**Joe Gartman** visits Ravenna to uncover the truth about Theodora, Empress of Rome.

#### 73 THE GARDENS OF COMO AND MAGGIORE

**Jane Knightly** jaunts about some of the prettiest gardens in Italy.

#### 77 FAST CULTURE

A town on the River Po, and its hot-headed, stubborn, fearless priest – with **Joe Gartman**.



48

### FOOD & DRINK

#### 79 FOUR TAKES ON COFFEE

We return to coffee and its versatility in creating seasonal treats.

#### 82 ITALY FROM THE SOURCE

Authentic dishes from Lonely Planet's new *From the Source* series.

#### 86 PRONTO!

Five quick-and-easy vegetarian meals.

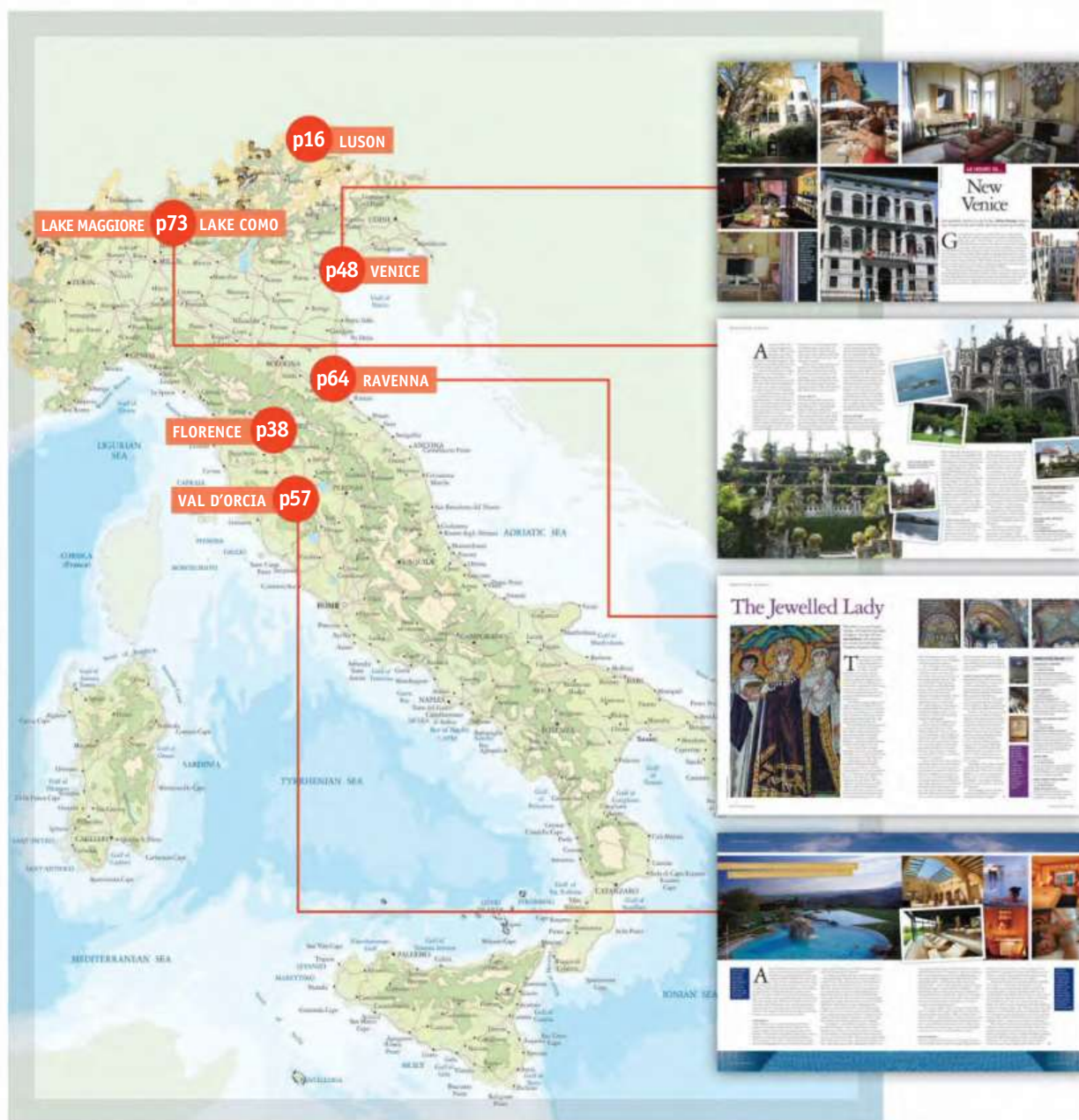
#### 89 DRINK ITALIA!

**Paul Pettengale** on fine island reds.



89





## MORE ITALIA!

## 6 READERS' PHOTO COMPETITION

The best each issue wins a bottle of Nino Franco Prosecco and cooler!

## 8 ITALIAN NEWS

Your round-up of the biggest and best news stories from around Italy.

## 12 TOP PICKS

Our choice of the best new Italian products.

## 14 EVENTS IN NOVEMBER

What's in the diary for travellers to Italy.

## 16 VIEWPOINT

The Luson Valley, gateway to the Dolomites.

## 19 LETTERS

Readers share their stories and pictures from their experiences in Italy, and tell us where we should be going next.



## 30 SUBSCRIBE TO ITALIA!

Never miss an issue of *Italia!* – and save on the shop price.

## 62 PAST ITALIA!

Milan's Sirenella Bridge – the Bridge of Mermaids – by Francesco Tettamanzi.

## 70 SPECIAL OFFER

Don't miss our special Christmas subscriptions offer!

## 92 BOOK REVIEWS

The latest cookery book, literature and the a guide to the history of the Vespa.

## 94 GETTING THERE

Plan your flight to Italy.

## 98 ITALIA! ICONS

The remarkable story of Murano glass, one of the treasures of Venice.

## ON THE COVER



p32

p48

p20

p57

p82

p89



YOUR ITALIA!

# READERS' PHOTO COMPETITION!

Send us your favourite photos from your Italian travels, and each month the best photo will win a bottle of **Nino Franco Rustico Prosecco** and cooler!\*



▲ **THIS MONTH'S WINNER**

*Poul Oldrich, Novy Jicin, Czech Republic*

"I send a picture of the Roman Colosseum in the evening. This picture was taken with a tripod on the bridge, March 2015."





**WIN!**  
NINO FRANCO RUSTICO  
PROSECCO & CHILLER\*



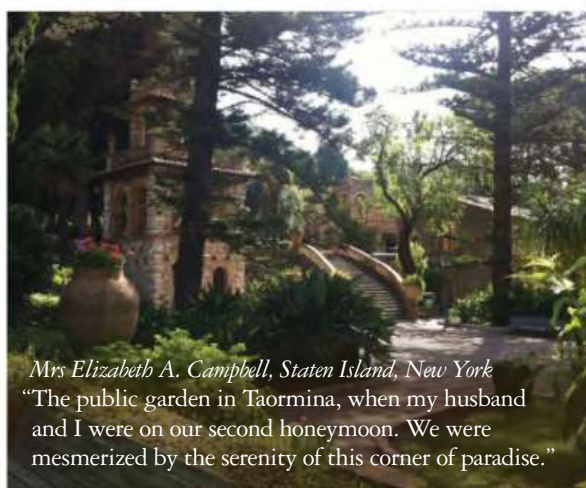
◀ *Peter Colligan,  
Waterlooville, Hampshire*  
“The Fiat 500 is a true Italian icon and it’s great to see so many still in daily use, particularly in the towns and villages where they are ideally suited to the narrow roads and alleyways. This photo was taken on a recent visit to our favourite region of Umbria.”



▲ *Marie Turner, Watton, Norfolk*  
“Taken in the beautiful town of Taormina on the last day of our amazing tour of Sicily. The town was crowded with tourists milling around, so I was lucky to capture this shop with its fascinating display of wares spilling out over the street, without a tourist in sight.”



◀ *Toni Izatt,  
Aurora, Ontario*  
“A couple shopping for fresh produce in Murano. We enjoyed a beautiful day there and we couldn’t help but take a few glass sculptures home with us.”



*Mrs Elizabeth A. Campbell, Staten Island, New York*  
“The public garden in Taormina, when my husband and I were on our second honeymoon. We were mesmerized by the serenity of this corner of paradise.”



◀ *Joseph P. Insana, by email*  
“On a recent visit I had the pleasure of visiting the Aqua Claudia, an aqueduct that supplied water to Ancient Rome; it was begun by Emperor Caligula in 38 AD and finished by Emperor Claudius in 52 AD.”

**HOW TO ENTER** Email high-resolution (300dpi) jpegs of your photos of Italy to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com) or send prints to ‘Reader Photo Competition’ at the address given on page 18. Please include a brief explanation of your photo, plus your name, delivery address and a phone number (for our couriers). You must be over 18 to enter.

**READER OFFER** *Italia!* readers get a 10 per cent discount off Nino Franco wines from [www.sommelierschoice.com](http://www.sommelierschoice.com) until 1 December 2015 by entering the code ‘italia10’ at the checkout.

Please note: Any photos you submit must be your own work and you must have the right to send them for inclusion on this page. By sending your entry, you are confirming that *Italia!*’s use of your photo(s) will not constitute infringement of any rights, and confirming that you are over 18.



\*Prosecco and cooler delivered to mainland UK addresses only



# THIS MONTH

## November 2015

In **Italian news** this month, Ernest Hemingway and Flavia Pennetta, Beyoncé, Jay-Z, Frosinone Football Club, chess cheats – and bacteria...



### ALL HAIL ITALIA!

Fascinating history, stunning beaches, wondrous architecture, glorious opera... There are so many reasons to love Italy – and that's before we've even got on to the food and wine! So it comes as no surprise to learn that the country has been picking up plaudits from those who've been bitten by wanderlust. In The Times Group's 2015 Readers' Travel Awards, voted for by tens of thousands of holidaymakers, Italy was named Best European Tourist Destination, Rome came second in the Best European City category, while the elegant Gritti Palace in Venice – loved by everyone from Peggy Guggenheim to Ernest Hemingway – was awarded the gong for Best Overseas Hotel. Elsewhere, Italy received the coveted Destination of the Year 2015 award, as voted for by the readers of Food And Travel magazine. We'll drink to that!



*Ernest Hemingway (right) and his fourth wife, Mary, are greeted by manager Raffaele Masprone on their arrival at the Gritti Palace Hotel, Venice, in 1954. The couple had come to recuperate after a disastrous African hunting trip in which they were involved in two plane crashes.*



Photograph © Press Association Images

Photography © iStock, unless otherwise stated

SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...


### PROSECCO SHOWS PROMISE

If you're suffering from withdrawal symptoms due to the shortage of prosecco this year, we have some good news. As *Italia!* went to press, Italian wine producers were preparing for harvest, and the general feeling in Prosecco and the north of the country was one of optimism following the warm summer weather. Said Andrew Bettini, export manager for Piera Martellozzo, "We've had a good summer, unlike last year, which was terrible." And while the quality of the grapes has yet to be ascertained, there's certainly a greater number of them. "At least there's more quantity," added Bettini. "Everybody ran out of prosecco [this year]."

### IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER MAJESTY...

If you're looking for Italian food that's fit for royalty, you might want to head to the new Little Italy restaurant at the Galleries shopping centre in Washington, Wearside. The owner, Robert Steel – who set up the eatery with his brother Charles – was a member of the kitchen team at Buckingham Palace, which means he's cooked for the Queen herself. He's also served aboard the Queen Elizabeth II, where he was Chef de Cuisine. Now the Steel brothers are aiming to bring a "premium product" to the area. "We're doing authentic Italian food, which I don't think there's a lot of around here," says Robert.





Photograph © Press Association Images / David Goldman

*US Open champion Pennetta has the cards to play and put her heart into the 2016 Rio Olympics.*

**FLAVIA: 'ROME OLYMPICS WILL BE MY GOAL'**  
Fresh from her triumph in the US Open, Pennetta is ready to defend her title. The 33-year-old from Apulia, who became the first Italian woman to win a Grand Slam and I call on everyone to put their hearts into it. Pennetta won Gold in the 200 metres freestyle at the 2004 Athens Olympics. In Rome, where everything is beauty, culture and tradition, she won the Games in 1960, faces competition from the world's best in Lima, Peru, in September 2017.

## FLAVIA: 'ROME OLYMPICS WILL BE A SMASH'

Fresh from her triumph in the US Open, Flavia Pennetta has backed Rome's bid to host the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The 33-year-old from Apulia, who beat fellow Italian Roberta Vinci in the final, said, "Italy has good cards to play all the way, and I call on everyone to put their heart into the bid." Pennetta's sentiments were echoed by swimmer Federica Pellegrini, who won Gold in the 200 metres freestyle at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. She said, "To bring the magic of the Olympics to a city like Rome, where everything is beauty, culture, history, would be magical and extraordinary." The Italian capital, which last hosted the Games in 1960, faces competition from Budapest, Hamburg, Los Angeles and Paris. The winner will be announced in Lima, Peru, in September 2017.

If the village of Civita di Bagnoregio ever hosted a street party, it would be a very small one – only ten people live there. And yet the village is attracting a lot of national interest at the moment. Why? Because this tiny hilltop settlement north of Rome is one of Italy's most stunning landmarks – and it's in danger of becoming extinct. The 1,200-year-old village, accessible only by a footbridge, is under constant threat from landslides and requires regular maintenance to prevent that from happening. The villagers already charge people a small fee to enter, but it isn't enough. So thousands of Italians, including the film maker Bernardo Bertolucci and former Italian President Giorgio Napolitano, have signed a petition calling for UNESCO to make Civita di Bagnoregio a World Heritage Site, a status that would guarantee it regular funding. "It's one of the most beautiful places in the world," said President of Lazio Nicola Zingaretti. Let's hope it stays that way.



S...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS

Police in Frosinone have warned fans of the local football team not to watch matches from private balconies, as they're in danger of collapsing. Since Frosinone Calcio were promoted to Serie A, fixtures against the likes of AS Roma and Sampdoria have seen their 10,000-capacity stadium sell out quickly. So some supporters have taken to watching the action from the balconies of nearby apartment blocks – and they're straining under the weight. Police are now taking steps to limit the number of people who can enter the buildings, with one supporter commenting, "If your brother and seven friends are on your balcony, it could collapse and everyone would talk about a tragedy that could have been avoided."

Beyoncé and Jay-Z are the latest celebrities to take a holiday in Italy – and it's fair to say they did it in style. The pop superstars hired a luxury yacht, believed to have cost nearly £600,000 for the week, to take them up the Amalfi Coast. In a series of photos published on Beyoncé's Instagram page, the couple and their daughter Blue Ivy can be seen laughing and joking aboard the vessel, and exploring the local architecture, and there's even a shot of a rather tasty-looking mushroom pizza waiting to be eaten. Judging by the snaps, they're Crazy In Love... with Italy!



Photograph © Press Association Images / Chris Pizzello



*It's believed that Ricciardi was broadcasting his matches to an accomplice working remotely on a computer*



#### CHECK MATE!

Chess player Arcangelo Ricciardi might never become a Grandmaster, but you can't knock his ingenuity. The Italian, a decent but unremarkable (1800-rated) player, raised eyebrows at the International Chess Festival of Imperia when he sailed through the early rounds of the tournament. It was only when he was asked to pass through a metal detector that a pendant was found around his neck, containing a tiny camera. It's believed that Ricciardi was broadcasting his matches to an accomplice working remotely on a computer, who was then using special software to calculate the best moves. These were then sent to Ricciardi via Morse Code to a signal box under his armpit. Referee Jean Coquerant revealed that he had suspected something was amiss. "In chess, performances like that are impossible," he told *La Stampa* newspaper. "I didn't think he was a genius, I knew he had to be a cheat."



#### PRISTINE (FORMER) CHAPEL

If you're a painter, what could be more inspiring than living and working in the very house that the great Michelangelo resided in? Now you have the opportunity to do just that, as the Florentine artist's Tuscan villa has gone on the market – for a cool £5 million. The eight-bedroom, seven-bathroom property near Siena was constructed around an ancient chapel, believed to date to the 11th century. It is flanked by Chianti vineyards and offers sumptuous views of the surrounding countryside. Michelangelo purchased the house in 1549, around 37 years after he painted the Sistine Chapel, and it remained in his family's custody until 1867. The current owner has restored much of the villa to its former glory, and even has the original deed, which describes Michelangelo as a "dear sculptor and Florentine citizen". The sale is being handled by Handsome Properties International – you'd better start saving those pennies.



#### DISHING THE DIRT

Who knew that bacteria could be so beautiful? For two days in September, the Colosseum in Rome was illuminated by a magnified image of the bacteria that lives on its surface. The artist responsible for the installation, Berlin-based Sabine Kacunko, described it as a message of peace. "I think we could learn a lot from the bacteria," said Sabine, who became fascinated by the particles as a result of being in New York City on 11 September 2001 when planes hit the World Trade Center. "In their own species, they build up a network, they corroborate and communicate, and maybe this is why they are the oldest life form." Kacunko collected the bacteria from the northwest side of the structure, which she then projected onto the outer wall of the 2,000-year-old Colosseum using a microscope. "I'm very happy to give the smallest life form the wonderful platform to communicate," she added.

ESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP P



#### VENICE HAS A VIEW TO DIE FOR

Venice has beaten the likes of New York, London and Paris to scoop an award for Best City Skyline. The Floating City received more than a quarter of the votes in a survey run by the Murals Wallpaper website, which specialises in wall coverings depicting spectacular vistas. Managing director Richard Wilde said, "While places like New York will always be popular in interior design, it's clear that people are looking to do something a little different these days." When we think of those awe-inspiring sunsets over the Rialto Bridge, we find it hard to believe that anyone wouldn't have voted for Venice!

#### ITALY'S ECONOMY IS BOUNCING BACK

It seems that the Italian economy is on the up! The government has raised its growth targets for both 2015 and 2016. Back in April, it forecasted that its gross domestic product would rise by 0.7 per cent by the end of this year, but this has now been raised to 0.9 per cent. And the prediction for next year has been lifted from 1.4 per cent expansion to 1.6 per cent. The new figures mean that Italy's budget deficit will be 2.6 per cent of its gross domestic product, well below the 3 per cent limit set by the European Union. "We're finally turning the corner," Prime Minister Matteo Renzi told a press conference.





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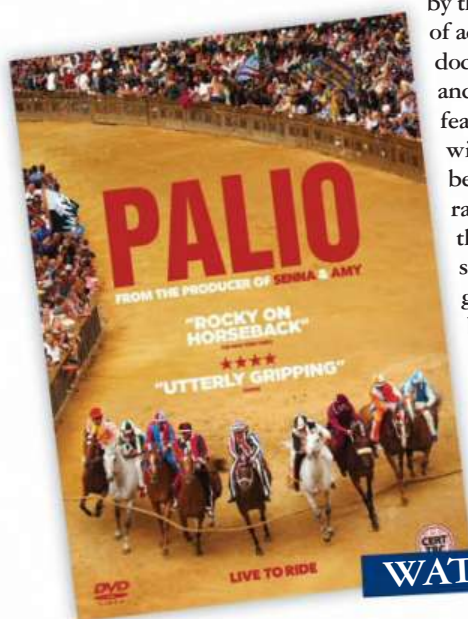
# ITALIA!'S *Top picks*

A startling new documentary, a rip-roaring read, designer kitchenware and... where would we be without chocolate ladybirds? *Italia!* brings you **the best of Italy** every month...

## ROCKY ON HORSEBACK

The Palio di Siena is one of the most important, and dramatic, events in the horse racing calendar. But according to the new documentary film *Palio* – now available on DVD – it's also one of the most corrupt. Made

by the producers of acclaimed documentaries *Senna* and *Amy*, the film features interviews with people who've been involved in the race, and some of the revelations are sure to leave you gobsmacked. It's been described as 'Rocky on horseback' – and *Palio* certainly packs a punch. £15.99, [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



**WATCH THIS!**



**EAT THIS!**

## CHOCOLATE LADYBIRDS

If you're planning on hosting a birthday party for your little ones, and you're looking for a sweet treat that'll put a smile on their faces, these colourful milk chocolate ladybirds from Carluccio's could be just the answer. Costing £3.95 for a 100g bag, they're smooth, sweet and delicious. And with each ladybird having its own little legs protruding from the bottom, they're about as cute as you can get! [www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)

## COOK'S KITCHEN ROOM SPRAY

Smell is one of the most powerful senses, so there's every chance that a squirt of this room spray from Laura Ashley will catapult you into the luscious foothills of Tuscany – no matter where you are. It combines the fragrances of olives and Italian lemons, bringing a fresh and delicate zest to your living quarters. Pair it with a drop of Merlot and a freshly baked *calzone*, and your imagined Italian adventure will be complete. £10, [www.lauraashley.com](http://www.lauraashley.com)

TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...

## *Top 3 gifts for* FERRARI FANS

Of course, **what he'd really love** is a real Ferrari, but if the household budget won't stretch to that this month, here are some themed alternatives...



**1 FERRARI SOUND**  
OK, so it's got a bit of a midlife-crisis vibe to it, but we reckon the Ferrari 512 Sound Racer is terrific fun. Basically, you plug the device into your car's cigarette lighter, select an empty frequency on your stereo and crank up the volume. Your friends will be amazed as the powerful roar of a Ferrari 512 resonates from your speakers, adapting to the speed of your car. Driving your Skoda down to the shops will never be the same again. £29.99, [www.gettingpersonal.co.uk](http://www.gettingpersonal.co.uk)





#### ▲ CHECK, PLEASE!

The days of waiting around in a restaurant to pay your bill are over, thanks to a new app. *Qkr! With MasterPass* enables diners to pay for their meal instantly and securely at branches of ASK Italian, Zizzi and Carluccio's, and, even though it was created by MasterCard, it works with any type of plastic payment. The app will benefit restaurants, too, of course, as the quicker payment process means they can squeeze in more customers. *Qkr With MasterPass* is free from the App Store and Google Play.

#### ◀ DESIGNER COFFEE MAKER

The colder months are synonymous with toasty warm drinks and cosy dinner parties, and Alessi has embraced this idea with its new autumn and winter range, which was launched in time for September's Home show in London. Key pieces in the collection include the 'Pulcina' espresso coffee maker (pictured), designed by Michele de Lucchi, 'Tea Rex', a kettle to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the famous 9093 by Michael Graves, and the 'Collo-alto' cutlery set created by French designer Inga Sempé. Prices vary. [store.alessi.com/gbr/en-gb](http://store.alessi.com/gbr/en-gb)



#### A NEW PAGE-TURNER ▶

Murder, mystery and eccentric characters abound in Santa Montefiore's new novel, *The Italian Matchmaker* (Simon & Schuster). In need of some adventure to illuminate his existence, Gianluca heads to the Amalfi Coast to stay at the magical Palazzo Montelimone, painstakingly restored by his parents. But his idyllic new life takes a sinister turn as revelations begin to emerge about the Palazzo's violent past. A real page-turner based in a spectacular Mediterranean setting, *The Italian Matchmaker* will provide the perfect antidote to those winter blues. £5.59, [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)



#### USE THIS!



#### KUHN RIKON KITCHENWARE

The Swiss are renowned for making delicious chocolate and fine watches – but, as the latest launch from Kuhn Rikon attests, they're also pretty nifty at making kitchenware. The range of cast-iron cooking pots, designed by Nicole Wyss, offer excellent heat retention, making them perfect for both cooking and serving. They come in red or black, oval or round, and in a range of sizes, so whether you're making tagliatelle for two or fettuccine for four, Kuhn Rikon has you covered. From £74.95, [co-uk.kuhnrikon.com](http://co-uk.kuhnrikon.com)

## THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS

### 2 FERRARI HAIRDRYER

If you want to get in pole position in the style stakes, your first port of call should be the Babylliss Pro Volare V2 Ferrari hairdryer. Like the famous Italian sports cars, it's sleek and red, while something called a tri-port ionic generator leaves your hair feeling soft and shiny. But the best part is that it contains an engine built by Ferrari itself – you'd better hold on to it tightly, in case it drives away! £139, [www.babylliss.co.uk](http://www.babylliss.co.uk)



### 3 FERRARI WATCH

Unlike its cars, Ferrari's GTB-C Chronograph Watch is somewhat understated – but we think it's all the better for it. Available with a stainless-steel link bracelet, or with a black or brown leather strap with rich crocodile graining, it's a subtly elegant timepiece for the discerning car fan. He'll doubtless be quick to acknowledge the distinctive, horizontally split two-tone dials on the display, which doff their cap to the Ferrari 250SWB California Spider of the 1950s. £195, [store.ferrari.com/gb\\_en](http://store.ferrari.com/gb_en)





# EVENTS IN NOVEMBER 2015

From All Saints' Day to Venice's Festival of Health, the religious calendar continues apace **in Italy this month** – but there are also festivals of dance, horse-racing, books, wine, beer, jazz, olive oil, comic books and chocolate ...

## ALL SAINTS' DAY

1 November  
Nationwide

In a tradition believed to have started around the 4th century AD, Roman Catholics – and many Protestants – celebrate their saints on the first day in November. The occasion is marked in Italy by a national holiday, and many Italians take the opportunity to spend time with friends and family, exchanging gifts and goodwill. The following day is the somewhat more sedate All Souls' Day, when many people take bouquets of fresh flowers to the graves of deceased loved ones.

## CLUB TO CLUB

4-8 November  
Turin

The Italians' passion for clubbing is legendary, and the long list of DJs to emerge from Italy reflects that. An assortment of those, along with other dance-inspired artists, fill the bill at this annual festival in the clubs, warehouses and exhibition spaces of Turin. This year, it's all about the number 15. It's 2015, it's the event's 15th anniversary, and there will be 15 acts performing. These include Radiohead's Thom Yorke, Jamie xx and Norwegian producer Todd Terje.  
[www.club2club.it](http://www.club2club.it)

## FIERACAVALLI

5-8 November  
Verona

It's fair to say there will be more than 'two gentlemen' in Verona during this massive four-day equestrian event, held at the city's Exhibition Centre. Now in its 117th year (yes, really!), the Fieracavalli is an absolute must for horse fans, packing in high-profile show jumping competitions, displays of different breeds, and stalls selling horse-related equipment, books and art. The event is always well attended, so we suggest you giddy-up and get yourself a ticket before they sell out!

## PISA BOOK FESTIVAL

6-8 November  
Pisa

Kindles and other e-readers might be all the rage at the moment, but nothing beats picking up a dusty old leather tome and reading a swashbuckling tale from decades ago. This three-day festival at the Pisa Congress Centre is the place to find such gems, along with thousands of other rip-roaring reads. But the festival is so much more than that: it's also a place for budding writers to meet publishers, fans to meet their favourite authors, and everybody to find literary inspiration.  
[www.pisabookfestival.it](http://www.pisabookfestival.it)

## MERANO WINE FESTIVAL

5-10 November  
Merano

The cold weather is drawing in, but if one thing's certain to warm your cockles, it's a glass or two of fine wine. You'll be spoilt for choice at this annual get-together in the gorgeous Alpine town of Merano, which has been attracting international grape aficionados since 1992. No fewer than 500 vintners and 100 food producers will be in attendance at the art nouveau Kurhaus, giving talks, sharing expert tips and, of course, letting you taste the fruits of their labour.  
[www.meranowinefestival.com](http://www.meranowinefestival.com)

## NOVEMBER FEST

13-16 November  
Arezzo

When in Italy, there's nothing like tucking into an authentic, er... German meal. Yes, for four days, the Tuscan city of Arezzo will be donning its lederhosen and celebrating the very best of Bavaria. Stalls will be tempting you with steins of beer, glühwein, bratwurst, schnitzel and, our personal favourite, roasted pork shin. It won't exactly be the healthiest few days you've ever had, but with goodies like that on offer, we reckon the diet can wait.





Merano Wine Festival



Photograph by Clipper verde (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0)] via Wikimedia Commons

## ROMA JAZZ FESTIVAL

14-29 November  
Rome

Italy might be better known for its tenors and sopranos, but it knows a thing or two about hosting a good jazz festival, too – as evidenced by this two-week-long showcase in the capital. Performing at the spectacular Auditorium Parco Della Musica will be a line-up of both Italian and international musicians, covering a range of sub-genres. Top of the bill is man of the moment, velvet-voiced US soul star Gregory Porter. Right, we're off to exercise our jazz hands... [www.romajazzfestival.it](http://www.romajazzfestival.it)

## OLIVE OIL FESTIVAL

15 November  
Florence

Visiting Florence this November? While the cooler weather will tempt you indoors to browse the city's magnificent museums and galleries, spare some time to visit the annual Olive Oil Festival, which takes place outdoors in Piazza Santo Spirito. The event showcases the fruits of the late-October *raccolta* (when the region's olives are picked from the trees and pressed into oil), but there will be stands offering natural honey, wine and other home-grown produce, too.

## BOB DYLAN

18-22 November  
Bologna

*Maggie's Farm, Like A Rolling Stone, Tambourine Man...* Bob Dylan has written some of the greatest songs in the history of folk and rock'n'roll. OK, so he's unlikely to win too many awards for his singing these days, but that kind of misses the point of what he's all about. As part of a European tour, he's playing four dates in Italy. Catch him at Bologna's Auditorium Manzoni on the 18th and 19th, and Milan's Teatro degli Arcimboldi on the 21st and 22nd. [www.bobdylan.com](http://www.bobdylan.com)

## BILBOLBUL

19-22 November  
Bologna

If Marvel and Manga are words you use in your everyday vocabulary, the chances are you'll have a ball at this international comic festival, held every year in Bologna. Come and meet graphic artists, collectors and other luminaries from the world of spaceships and superheroes, chat to like-minded enthusiasts or spend some time browsing the stalls for that rare copy of *2000AD* you've been trying to get your hands on for years. Kerpow! [www.bilbolbul.net](http://www.bilbolbul.net)

## CIOCCOLATO

20-29 November  
Turin

There will be a certain Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory vibe around Turin's Piazza San Carlo as thousands gather to celebrate their favourite confectionery. Now in its 12th year, the event showcases the finest chocolate from both Italy and abroad, with tastings, demonstrations and games for the kids. Elsewhere, you can browse over 4,000 products from around 80 different producers at the Chocolate Show, and sample some of the richer artisan varieties in the Boutique. You know what? We think we will! [www.cioccola-to.it](http://www.cioccola-to.it)

## FESTA DELLA SALUTE

21 November  
Venice

When Venice was ravaged by plague in 1630, killing a third of the population, the surviving locals built a majestic church as an offering to the Virgin Mary, in the hope that she would protect them from the disease. The Salute is now one of Venice's most celebrated structures, and every year thousands of people – most notably the city's officials – descend on the building to pay their respects, soak up the atmosphere and tuck into delicious Venetian cuisine.

Please note that the dates of all events are subject to change. If you plan to attend, check events are going ahead before you travel. All attempts are made to present the correct details.







# VIEWPOINT

Known as the Gateway to the Dolomites, the **Luson Valley** is a hiker's paradise with a number of trails leading from here into the mountains that surround it...

The Germans call it Lüssen, as do its inhabitants. Though we are well inside the modern Italian border here, some 40km northeast of Bolzano, roughly the same northwest of Cortina d'Ampezzo, and at least half that distance to the nearest crossing into Austria, the people of Luson (in Italian) and the valley in which their *comune* (*Gemeinde*, in German) sits are almost all German speakers; fewer than one in 50 of the locals consider themselves native Italophones. One thousand metres above sea level, the *Lüsner Alm*, as the Germans

call these pastures, give to the Zillertaler Alps (the *Alpi Aurine*, in Italian) to the north (seen here), the Ötztal Alps (*Alpi Venoste*) to the west, and the Dolomites to the south. The Peitlerkofel (*Sass de Putia*) and Aferer Geisler (just use the German, it's easier) hiking trails lead from here into the Dolomites, while there are also six Nordic Walking trails. (It's all right, you're not expected to speak Norwegian as well...) Do mark, however, that it can snow a bit round these parts in winter though. ■







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# LETTERS TO ITALIA!

Share your Italian experiences with us, and tell us what you would like to see in the magazine, by sending your photographs and letters to [italia@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:italia@anthem-publishing.com)...



Rome's Trevi Fountain is usually quite busy, but when there's a special occasion...

Photography © iStock

## COOKERY CLUB

I very much enjoy *Italia!* magazine, especially the recipe pages and the regional features, which I find very useful for planning my several visits to Italy each year.

One of my main interests is Italian cooking. I currently run an Italian Cookery Club in Dublin with 18 members who share an interest in the food and wines of Italy. Membership of the group has helped us share recipes and as a 'team' to develop good cookery skills. I would be very interested in getting some advice from your experts or readers on finding a school, *agriturismo*, restaurant or *casalinga* where I could develop my hands-on cookery skills a bit further in an authentic setting. Most cookery courses in Italy seem to be aimed at tourists or at those who are new to Italian cuisine who want an experience that includes a few typical recipes and trips to the markets, olive oil farms and wine tasting. I am looking for something more advanced and of greater length than a few days – a few weeks or month would be ideal. At this stage I am not sure if such opportunities exist but I would welcome any advice you or your readers may offer.

**Tom McConalogue, Dublin**

*Glad you're enjoying the magazine and the recipes Tom. We're planning in a major feature on cookery schools for early next year covering 'basic', 'intermediate' and 'advanced' levels of tuition. Cookery school holidays are increasingly popular among our readers and we want to ensure there's something for everyone. If you're looking for a placement of up to a month however, you'd be best off approaching a restaurant directly – pick a town, do your research and fire off a few emails. If you can cover your accommodation you'd be surprised at how many restaurants will offer placements for free (though be prepared to do some dishwashing as well as working with the chefs).*

OF THE MONTH  
NOV 2015

## WHEN IN ROME

A few years ago my husband and I decided to have a long weekend in Rome. Whenever in Rome our first visit is always to the Trevi Fountain. It too was much more crowded than usual. Finally, the penny dropped; we learned that this was the weekend the Beatification of Pope John Paul II. We had never seen so many groups of people of all ages.

Guides, scouts and nuns had arrived from all over the world, as indeed had many families, and this only added to the incredible atmosphere that only a city such as Rome can offer. Tents were set up along the closed roads, with many people claiming their places in front of the large television screens on display.

The rest of the day was spent meandering along the busy streets, re-visiting other favourite places before returning to the Trevi Fountain to see it illuminated.

All of our previous trips to Rome have been special but this one was even more so, and just to be present on such a joyous and important occasion as this was for so many people we felt very privileged to witness.

**Jenny Coulson, Salisbury**

## TRAPANI? ARE YOU SURE?

I just received my (September) issue of *Italia!* magazine in the mail and was excited to see an article about northwest Sicily, which my wife and I have visited. I think – think – there is an error in the caption of the top left photo on page 37, however. It reads, "Overlooking the Port of Trapani."

*Look out for a Cookery Schools feature in Italia! in the New Year*



I'm pretty sure it's a photo of Castellammare del Golfo, having stayed there for a few days and having taken a photo from almost the same spot.

We have enjoyed receiving your magazine for some time now and look forward to receiving the monthly issue. Please keep up the good work.

**Roger Trudeau, via email**

*I think you're right, Roger. Apologies. Jon Palmer*

## NEW SUBSCRIBER

We have only recently discovered your magazine, this year, but have now taken up your subscription offer as we found we were buying it every month anyway – in fact, we found we were even looking forward to the publication day, so we knew we had to take out a subscription! And we were very surprised to work out that the magazine must be ten years old by now, if you have made 130 plus issues and it comes out every month. Well done if that's true! We like to go to Italy when we can and always take our summer holidays there, usually in Sardinia, though we have been to the Adriatic coast too.

**Maria Armes, via email**

## YOU TELL US!

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# Homes for Restoration

For many buyers in Italy, transforming an old tumbledown property into a bespoke home is the ultimate dream. Thousands of people have done it, and so can you.

**Fleur Kinson** gets you started...

It's a classic property fantasy. In a beautiful stretch of Italian countryside, you buy a dirt-cheap pile of old stones that used to be a handsome farmhouse. Long abandoned, and crumbling back into the earth, you will be its rescuer. In return, it will be the blank canvas for your property dreams. You re-jig the layout, resurrect charming period details, put in modern innovations, use skilled local craftsmen to re-create a traditional exterior, landscape the grounds and then... enjoy countless hours of Italian *dolce vita*, accompanied by a huge sense of creative satisfaction.

Certainly, over the last forty years or so, many foreign buyers in Italy have turned a dream like this into a reality. But restoration projects come in all shapes and sizes, and the rebuilding of a classic farmhouse is merely one kind. Restorers have also fixed up old apartments, village houses, period villas – you name it, it has been done.

They have tackled projects on scales both grand and modest – completely knocking down old ruins and rebuilding with the original materials; or carefully re-animating a standing structure that retains four walls and a roof; or thoroughly restoring a section of an old property to use and leaving the rest uninhabitable; or renovating a nearly-habitable house to a state of comfort.

Whatever the size and scale of the project, the end-result is invariably all the more loved by its owner for the personal input involved.

## WHY RESTORE?

Restoration isn't for everyone. If you just want a holiday home to start using immediately, you should buy a newly-built place or a venerable old property that someone else has already lovingly restored. You wouldn't have to concern yourself with design or building work,

planning permissions, living with mess and uncertainty, worrying about unexpected costs, or any of the other issues that restorers often have to address. But if you *are* the kind of person who dreams of doing up an old place, then you shouldn't let anything deter you. You probably know already the reasons why you want to do it.

For most, it's that delicious element of choice and personal touch. You get to create a home that precisely suits your own taste and requirements. Depending on the scale of the restoration, you get to choose the layout of rooms, the building materials, all the fittings and finishings. And on top of this there's the huge sense of achievement that comes when you finally see your ideas become a completed physical building in front of you – an

Restoration projects come in all shapes and sizes







*Restoration lets you create a home that precisely  
suits your own taste and requirements*





## FRANCAVILLA FONTANA

Type of property **Trullo complex**

Number of bedrooms **4**

Price **€95,000**

Location **Puglia**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd.** ☎ 01322 660988

[www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)

4 bed stone built trullo complex in the countryside about 5km from Francavilla Fontana, 30 minutes from Brindisi airport and the Ionian Sea. About 120sqm of accommodation with various buildings. The first building is the house, which includes a living room, dining room with corner kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. The second building comprises 2 rooms as yet to be finished, whilst at the front of the property there is another area to be finished which includes a bedroom and bathroom. The property, which has electricity connected, sits in about 5,000sqm (just over an acre) of land with olive grove and fruit trees, there is both an artesian well and tank to provide water supply, and an external oven. Investment for home, holiday rentals or B&B. Ref: 3424



## FABBRICHE DI VALLICO

Type of property **Mill**

Number of bedrooms **TBA**

Price **€150,000**

Location **Fabbrie di Vallico**

Contact **Casa Travella Ltd.** ☎ 01322 660988

[www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)

This old mill with rights to the water from Turrite Cave is located on the banks of the river at the entrance to the town of Fabbrie di Vallico, some 30km north of Lucca and about an hour from Pisa airport. The mill, which is still in its original condition, is built over 2 floors, with the entrance on the ground floor leading to 2 large rooms, whilst on the lower level the millstones can also still be found. The property could either be maintained as a mill in its current condition, or be converted into an excellent family home or holiday accommodation. In the case of the latter, the rights to the use of the water could also be sold to an interested buyer. An excellent original water mill with options to choose for future use. Ref: 3806.



*Solar panelling will save you a fortune*

enduring testament to your vision and your efforts. You'll have brought an old, neglected home back to life, and given it a whole new future.

There are practical advantages to restoring, too. You could end up with a charming, traditional old building underpinned with state-of-the-art structuring and internal systems. Your centuries-old

farmhouse will have perfect modern plumbing and electricity; it will be energy-efficient and earthquake-proof. You might choose to put in alternative energy-generation systems (solar panelling will save you a fortune on energy bills), underfloor heating, other modern innovations. Meanwhile, you can still hang on to all the external

*End up with a charming traditional old building underpinned with state-of-the-art structuring*





rustic charm that made you want an Italian home in the first place.

Even that most precious property asset, location, might be better steered to your benefit if you choose to restore rather than to buy newly-built or ready-restored – especially if you're going to knock down an old ruin and re-build it from scratch. Consider for a moment that your ideal location is usually easier to find than your ideal home *in* your ideal location. If you can find your perfect view, you can probably turn any old building with access to that view into a lovely home. And if you're going to be knocking it down and rebuilding, you can always position any part you like to face the view.

### SIZE AND SCALE

As we noted earlier, 'restoration' covers a broad range of building projects. Some are large-scale overhauls and some are modest tweakings. Only you can know the size and scale of the restoration you might want to undertake, and thus the state of the property you should be looking to buy. There are pros and cons to each common type of restoration project. And on that subject, Kevin L. Gibney of the agency PropertyForSaleMarche.com has much to say.

Ready-restored houses that need no further work offer good value for money today, Kevin says, "but on the downside you have to accept the prior owner's ideas for how the house should look and function." Meanwhile, "Structurally-restored houses requiring finishing work are typically houses that have been re-built from a ruin and sold with all the major structural elements completed. With this type of house, the rigours of planning approvals and heavy construction work are complete and the buyer can move on to the fun things like room divisions, tile selection, wall colours and bathroom and kitchen design.

"Standing houses to restore are still upright and the building work just reinforces the structure, changes the layout where possible, and installs new plumbing, heating, electrics and damp-proofing. These houses allow for the preservation of architectural character and period details, and in today's market they deliver excellent value for money. The downside is that while such houses are terrific when finished, they never have the build-quality of a new-build and some people don't want to wait the four to twelve months a property of this type may require to complete."

*If you can find your perfect view, you can probably turn any old building with access to that view into a lovely home*



### CASA MENOCHIA

Type of property **Farmhouse, unrestored**

Number of bedrooms **3-4**

Price **€60,000**

Location **Montalto delle Marche**

Contact **Marche Property Net** [info@marchepropertynet.com](mailto:info@marchepropertynet.com)

☎ **+39 339 101 9042** [www.marchepropertynet.com](http://www.marchepropertynet.com)

Casa Menochia would be the perfect property for people wishing to start their own eco-farm. This property is for sale with circa 2 hectares of gently sloping, south facing pastureland and circa 3 hectares of woodland. Right in the middle of the land is a ruin built in around 1880 with old stones and antique roof tiles. The estimated floor space is circa 170sqm. The road is in need of repair estimated to cost around €6,000. However, this can be combined with bringing in the required services like water and electricity. Once access has been improved, the property is perfectly located – only 2 minutes from Montalto delle Marche, a beautiful old and historic hilltop town that has all the amenities you could require.



### COLLE SAN STEFANO

Type of property **Farmhouse, unrestored**

Number of bedrooms **TBC**

Price **€390,000**

Location **Castelraimondo**

Contact **Marche Property Net** [info@marchepropertynet.com](mailto:info@marchepropertynet.com)

☎ **39 339 1019042** [www.marchepropertynet.com](http://www.marchepropertynet.com)

Colle San Stefano consists of 3 farmhouses, which are currently in different conditions, from totally finished to a ruin. The largest farmhouse, the Manor, has a floor area of 550sqm and is partly renovated. The second farmhouse, which is a ruin, has 400sqm of floor area. The third house is a completely restored cottage of 66sqm. The whole property is on top of a hill 430 metres above sea level. It is surrounded by well-established vineyards famous for producing the organic version of Verdicchio di Matelica DOC. Included in the price is 1.5 hectares of land but more land is available of up to 10 hectares.





## CASA TRADIZIONALE

Type of property **House**

Number of bedrooms **3-4**

Price **€145,000**

Location **Ripe San Ginesio/Macerata**

Contact **Property For Sale Marche**

**info@propertyforsalemarche.com**

**+39 347 538 6668 www.propertyforsalemarche.com**

All of the traditional characteristics you've been dreaming about – from walking distance to a traditional hilltop town, to amazing views a traditional olive grove and lots of classic architectural touches. It's a standing house to restore, with plans and restoration budget available. Space for 3-4 good-sized bedrooms plus extra living space in out buildings.



## CASA PERFETTA

Type of property **Ruin**

Number of bedrooms **4-6**

Price **€88,000**

Location **Casa-di-Cristo, Tolentino/Macerata**

Contact **Property For Sale Marche**

**info@propertyforsalemarche.com**

**+39 347 538 6668 www.propertyforsalemarche.com**

Ruin to restore, up to 400sqm, 2 buildings and pool authorized. Space for a 4-6 bedroom house. Great views, easy access, close to all sights and services, big olive grove, flat full hectare of land. Close to San Ginesio, Colmurano, Tolentino. 30 minutes to beaches and mountains, under 1 hour to Ancona airport.



*Try to find one that still has foundations, load-bearing walls and a roof*

Kevin concludes that ruins to demolish and rebuild might be the most satisfying kind of restoration. "It's wonderful to see such a project through," he says. "The home is completely customized for your needs. Plus, you end up with a house that has state-of-the-art structural elements, energy systems, damp-proofing and so on. The downside for some people is the time it takes (typically one to two years), and the cost per square metre of floor space – which is typically higher than on other types of restoration."

many recovered materials as possible from the original structure. This also maintains some continuity in history and character, of course.

If you opt instead for a standing house to restore, try to find one that still has foundations, load-bearing walls and a roof – as these are generally the three most expensive things to replace on an old tumbledown building. Even if you ultimately have to replace the roof, its presence up until now will have helped keep the walls in better condition. Always pay special

*You can save a fortune on building materials by re-using as many recovered materials as possible*

Whatever the scale of your restoration project, you're likely to be interested in ways to keep costs under control. The first thing you can do, however obvious it might sound, is not to buy more property than you actually need. The biggest factor influencing the price of any restoration project is how many square metres of floor space you're going to restore. If you find a very large property that's perfect for you in every other way and you can't resist it, consider restoring and occupying only part of it. You could do the rest of the building – or buildings – in the future if you decide to.

If you opt for a ruin which you plan to knock down, obviously you can save yourself a fortune on building materials by re-using as

attention to walls when choosing a property. Cracks might be fixable or might mean you're better off demolishing and rebuilding.

### FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

When it comes time to do the interior of your new home, of course you'll be wise to shop around for fixtures and fittings. Note that Italian builders' merchants sell plenty of attractive but inexpensive ready-made kitchens and bathrooms to tempt you. If you have an aptitude for DIY, you could obviously save a lot of money by doing your own plastering, painting, carpentry and even plumbing. But if you're in any doubt about your skills, you're better leaving it to the professionals. ➤



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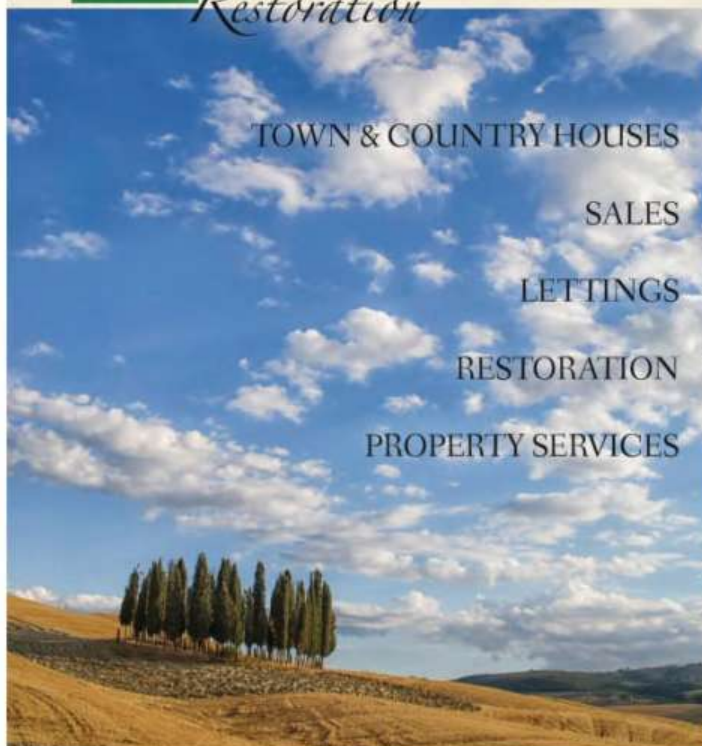
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# RESTORATION REGIONAL GUIDE



## INTRODUCTION

Restorations in Italy can often take longer than you thought and cost more than you budgeted for – it is simply the nature of Italian laws and working practices. But with that in mind, Italy does provide excellent property renovation potential. The *piano casa*, introduced in 2009, allows property owners to enlarge their homes by a specific percentage, with a larger allowance if you embark on a complete rebuild, use environmentally friendly materials or meet energy efficiency requirements. However, each region has its own variations of the *piano casa*, so it's vital you look into the local planning laws before doing anything else.

## TUSCANY AND UMBRIA

① Because of its popularity, prices in Tuscany and neighbouring Umbria are higher than elsewhere – a situation that's exacerbated as the number of suitable properties continues to dwindle. Nowadays it's difficult to find typical farmhouses needing restoration, especially in the sought-after area between the provinces of Pisa, Siena and Florence, better known as Chianti – or 'Chiantishire' due to the number of wealthy Brits who have relocated there. However, there are still great restoration opportunities outside this area in places such as Lunigiana in the province of Massa e Carrara at the northern tip of Tuscany, and Garfagnana in the province of

Lucca in the north. The terrain around Lunigiana and Garfagnana is more mountainous and hilly, so you won't find the typical Tuscan farmhouses of Chiantishire; instead, these houses are often built in stone with wood-beamed ceilings. Moving southeast, Umbria offers good value around Lake Trasimeno near the Tuscan border. The medieval hill-towns of Todi and Orvieto are particularly popular with foreign buyers and tumbledown homes in the surrounding countryside both start at roughly double Lake Trasimeno's prices.

## MOLISE

② Molise remains largely undiscovered by the foreign buyer, which creates a huge potential for property investments. Being the second smallest Italian region, after Valle d'Aosta, Molise has yet to be discovered by the Italians too, who are aware of its existence but quite often don't know very much about it and its beauties. Located on the eastern flank of Italy, with a short coastline on the Adriatic, Molise offers its visitors jaw-dropping views with high mountains, rounded hills and beautiful shores. But more importantly, Molise offers a property market completely undiscovered by non-local buyers. In fact, outside the main cities of Isernia and Campobasso, prices for restoration properties are very low indeed. Although larger and less isolated properties can readily command prices in the €150,000–€250,000 range, it's quite easy to find two-up, two-down townhouses to be restored for as little as €20,000, and similar country homes for €30,000–€35,000. The main downside of Molise is the lack of infrastructure and services. For instance, Molise hasn't got its own airport – the closest ones with flights to the UK are Pescara, Naples and Bari – and many roads need major improvements. Yet Molise has great potential and when buyers do start to discover this beautiful region, prices will inevitably go up, which will offer great returns to those who have invested early.



## LE MARCHE

③ Described as 'Italy in one region', Le Marche enjoys a little bit of all of Italy's characteristics, which is why it has proven so popular with foreign buyers. Prices are still affordable, and old farmhouses to be restored can be found at €100,000-€150,000, especially in the southern part of the region, with higher prices for properties that possess sea views. However, as the cost of buying and restoring creeps up, many investors are now looking at more traditional houses, especially townhouses situated in the pretty hilltop villages and properties with roof terraces. Fortunately, there are styles and prices to suit all pockets. The main characteristic of homes in Le Marche is the light yellow brick in which they are built. As with anywhere else, if you want to restore a home with original features here, make sure you choose a restoration company with experience in doing this type of restoration, and always ask to be shown previous jobs the company has done in that style.

## ABRUZZO

④ This region has always been considered one of the most interesting when it comes to restoration projects. It boasts a range of scenery, from snow-capped peaks in the west to golden beaches in the east. So buy a property in the hills and you'll have access to both ski and beach resorts. It also benefits from good infrastructure, with easy access by road and air. There are a great many restoration properties in Abruzzo, which becomes plainly obvious while you are driving through any road across this region, where country homes in need of restoration lie waiting in stunning surroundings. Properties here are similar to those in Le Marche, but prices are generally lower. Ruins nestling in the countryside start as low as €20,000, and there are plenty of sizeable houses and farmhouses to be found for less than €100,000.

## PIEDMONT

⑤ Restoration properties in Piedmont are becoming more popular as the trend to restore a farmhouse with a vineyard grows. Piedmont is famous worldwide for its prestigious wines such as Barolo, Barbaresco and Nebbiolo. Here the typical property to restore is a *cascina*, the local word for a farmhouse. Farmhouses in Piedmont are different from those that can be found in other regions (especially in central Italy), as they are usually lower (no more than two floors) and use not only the part of the building that was originally used as a dwelling, but also the parts that were used as a hayloft on the upper floor and a stable on the ground floor. This type of division of the building makes for very interesting restoration projects. Despite the popularity of the Langhe wine production area, prices are reasonable and a *cascina* to be restored – with no existing vineyard but enough land to plant one – start from as little as €90,000.

## THE ISLANDS

⑥ Sardinia and Sicily are very different in character but both islands offer affordable options. Unspoilt Sardinia is a paradise with a low population and a gentle, respectful culture. It also benefits from having three international airports. Sardinia has many village and inland rural properties in need of restoration. You might spend €100,000 on a six-bedroom village home needing €20,000 of work. You can even find properties for four-digit sums inland or in the mountains. The areas around Alghero in the north, and the south coast, including Cagliari, are increasingly popular among foreign buyers. Sicily is the Mediterranean's most populous island, and its north coast and southeast corner are good places to invest. A village home will go for €40,000 and you'll spend the same restoring it. The south coast and northwest tip are the cheapest places. Just be warned: building work and bureaucracy move slowly on Sicily.



*Small, run-down properties in remote locations can still be bought for amazingly low prices*





## ROMANA

Type of property **Town centre apartment**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€184,000**

Location **Montalcino, Tuscany**

Contact **Toscana Restoration** [info@toscanarestoration.com](mailto:info@toscanarestoration.com)

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Situated in a pleasant small hill town within the prestigious *comune* of Montalcino, this apartment has been carefully restored to a perfect shell and now awaits a buyer wanting to put their own finishing touches to the property! The apartment consists of a sitting room with kitchen, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a large, useful workshop space on the ground floor below. Entrance to the property is independent from a small terrace. The apartment is within a few steps of shops, restaurant, bars and excellent pizza! Siena is thirty-five minutes away and Florence, Pisa or Rome are accessible by public transport.



## ABBEY HABIT

Type of property **Village house**

Number of bedrooms **3**

Price **€169,000**

Location **Val d'Orcia, Tuscany**

Contact **Toscana Restoration** [info@toscanarestoration.com](mailto:info@toscanarestoration.com)

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A 3 storey village house full of traditional Tuscan features needing sympathetic restoration. Structurally sound but lacking any modern day comforts (or necessities; there is no bathroom) the property, set in a most attractive walled hill top village, will provide a large eat in kitchen, sitting room, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms and a wine cellar! The setting of the property, in a medieval village in the heart of the Val d'Orcia and the prestigious vineyards of the Brunello di Montalcino denomination, could hardly be bettered. Worthy of *Grand Designs*!



*You're sure to be impressed by the standard of workmanship*

As for electricity, have you thought about installing solar panels or other alternative energy systems to help keep your property's bills down? These were mentioned earlier on, and really are a great idea. Utility costs are quite high in Italy, and it's a bit mad not to make use of the nation's abundant sunshine to keep your appliances going.

You might also, before you even choose a property to buy, ask your estate agent if they offer a 'fixed price contract' on homes for restoration. This is an arrangement in which the full cost – and timescale – of all the restoration

care a great deal about creating beautiful buildings. Whether your restoration is big or small, you're sure to be impressed by the standard of workmanship you'll see.

Italian bureaucracy, however, may not impress you quite as much. Papers and official permits might take longer to be processed than you'd like. However, things do get through eventually, and your project is unlikely to be stymied for too long by red tape. Most agents and builders are skilled at dealing with all the relevant local bureaucracy and can help you through it.

*Italian builders are skilled artisans who care a great deal about creating beautiful buildings*

work is agreed in advance. Labour, materials, insulation, taxes – all are to be covered by one unchanging price. So there's no danger of sudden added costs borne of unexpected difficulties encountered in the course of restoration.

## STANDARDS AND PERMISSIONS

It's worth noting what a high standard of craftsmanship and dedication you can reliably expect from Italian builders. Overseas buyer-restorers frequently comment on this. Italian builders, masons and carpenters are extremely skilled artisans who plainly

As with all aspects of restoration, never forget how many people just like you have gone through all this before, and come out the other side smiling. Restoring an old home in Italy is an adventure, and normally one with a very happy ending. ■

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James and Alastair bought a small house north of Lake Como

Photograph courtesy of James Beauvoir and Alastair McAvoy



## OUR RESTORATION

**H**ampshire-based James Beauvoir and his partner Alastair McAvoy own a small rural house north of Lake Como, not far from the border with Switzerland. They spend a full month there every summer and another in the winter ski season, and make the house available to friends and family throughout the rest of the year.

What drew them to Italy? "I'd taken many holidays to Italy before I met Alastair," James explains, "and was naturally smitten with the place. Not long after Alastair and I got together, I discovered that he'd never been to Italy and so I was determined to remedy this. Thankfully, he loved the place as much as I did. We might not have had a future together if he hadn't!

"Alastair is an architect and I do work with interior design, so it was fairly inevitable that we'd want to do up an old house together eventually. It was while we were on holiday on Lake Como a few years ago that we noticed how surprisingly inexpensive local property was – especially toward the mountainous north of the lake. We're both keen skiers, and we knew that there were some small ski resorts up in that area. Before we knew it, we had arranged to meet with an estate agent and were viewing houses.

"Ours is a small two-bedroom cottage on the outskirts of a little village. It was just about habitable when we bought it, but we made a few internal changes such as knocking together two small rooms to form one large one and dividing another into a study and extra bathroom. The plumbing and electricity were ancient, so we had them entirely updated. Some of the old kitchen floor tiles were quite lovely and we agonised over whether to keep them, but in the end we opted for a bit of extravagance and put down fine travertine flooring. The kitchen is gorgeous now. Alastair is an excellent cook, and we needed that room to be particularly nice for him!

"We had no problems whatsoever with the building work we did. Our estate agent recommended some great local builders, and they were very dedicated and hard-working. We became friends with a couple of them and sometimes have them round for drinks. Friendliness is one of the things Alastair and I love most about Italy. We've been made to feel hugely welcome by everyone in the village, and we know all our neighbours. The Italians have such a wonderful sense of community.

"At the moment, because of our work, we're just visiting the house in summer and the ski season, but it's clear to us that autumn and spring would also be beautiful here. We hope to be able to make more frequent visits eventually."



### LUXURY APARTMENTS IN HISTORICAL PALACE

Type of property **Apartments**

Number of bedrooms **various**

Price **from €30,000**

Location **Scalea**

Contact **Calabria Property Consultants**

[info@calabriapropertyconsultants.com](mailto:info@calabriapropertyconsultants.com) ☎ +39 338 6495 587

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One of the dominating buildings of Scalea's old town, just off the Piazza Palma di Bonis, is being renovated into luxury apartments, offering the opportunity to own a piece of Italian history. Built This palace will offer 11 apartments from 60sqm to 200sqm. The building requires renovation with minimal structural work and many of the original features. Features include high ceilings, tall shutters and windows, arched portals, marble stairs, internal court yards and sea views. Each apartment will have balconies to enjoy the views and there are 2 internal court yards for relaxing. Working closely with a local architect, advice will be on hand to help you recreate history and the Italian home of your dreams. Funding is available for the restoration work. An ideal location and you won't need a car.



### HISTORICAL BUILDING, RESTORATION AGREED

Type of property **Apartments**

Number of bedrooms **various**

Price **€80,000**

Location **Scalea**

Contact **Calabria Property Consultants**

[info@calabriapropertyconsultants.com](mailto:info@calabriapropertyconsultants.com) ☎ +39 338 6495 587

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Located along the front tier of buildings in the beautiful old town of Scalea, palazzo Metestasio is one of several prominent buildings to grace this *centro storico*. Named after the famous 18th-century Italian poet Pietro Metastasio, who spent some time in Scalea as a student, the building is now under project for restoration. Many of the original features will be restored/maintained including the external facades, thick ceiling beams, internal stone walls and an original fireplace. The project will redevelop the building into 3 luxury apartments with terraces and sea views.



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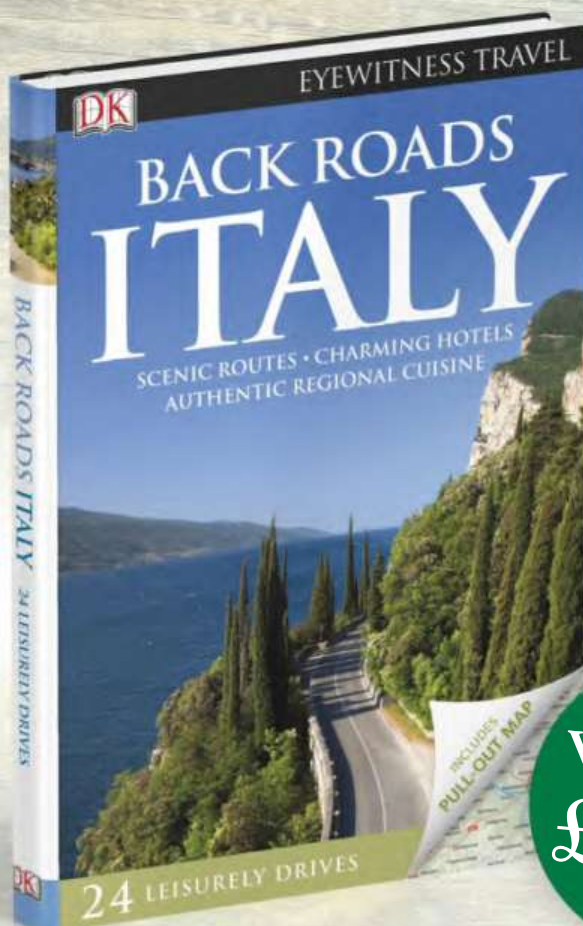
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*Walter's cocktails include the Buonanotte, named by George Clooney, La Nina's Passion, in honour of George's mother, and the Lucky Spritz, whose invention coincided with a chance meeting that ended in marriage.*



# MEETING WALTER

Walter Bolzonella has been working at the Belmond Cipriani for 37 years. **Adrian Mourby** goes to visit him every time he's in Venice to hear some more tales of famous guests...



Photograph © Tyson Sadlo Photographer/Belmond Hotel Cipriani





**I**t was a hot, humid day when I reached the Belmond Cipriani, that oh-so-discreet Venetian hotel that lies on Giudecca opposite Palladio's church of San Giorgio Maggiore. So discreet is the Cipriani in fact that you can't really see it at all from the outside. It exists behind walls and hedges and appears to have no external shape to it at all. Most people arrive by water taxi or hotel shuttle to a small lawn in front of reception but having stayed there before I knew a way in from the quayside of the Giudecca

but even so, I do not see him from one year to the next. Nevertheless, Walter has a very good memory for faces. It comes from the days when he started at the Cipriani, a time when you billed to someone's account, not to their room number. The barman needed to know every guest by name but, as Walter admits, 37 years ago it was easier because people tended to stay longer.

I ordered a martini and Walter instructed one of the younger waiters in Italian how he should make it while we talked about some of his famous clients.

*The Belmond Cipriani's bar is the focal point of the Venetian hotel and at the centre of the bar, still busy after 37 years is barman Walter Bolzonella*

Canal. Once in the grounds, the humidity of Venice seemed to evaporate, and I made my way through a series of serene, silent gardens and into the hotel proper – and its bar.

The Cipriani's bar is the focal point of the hotel and wonderfully air-conditioned, and at the centre of the bar, still busy after 37 years, is Walter Bolzonella.

Born in a village outside Venice, Walter is a dapper man, always in white and effortlessly cool. "Ah Mr Adrian..." he smiles. Like many people I visit Walter when in Venice even if I'm not staying at the Cipriani,

Walter started at the "Cip" in the '70s when the Guinness sisters still owned the hotel. "No one signed for anything in those days. The guest trusted you and you trusted the guest".

Among those whom Walter has served along the way have been Elizabeth Taylor, who wanted a martini for her dog, Tom Cruise, who was keen to get behind the bar and mix drinks himself, and President Ronald Reagan.

"We served drinks in the President's suite but we were told he would not be coming into the bar. However, one day I did see him enter my bar and I



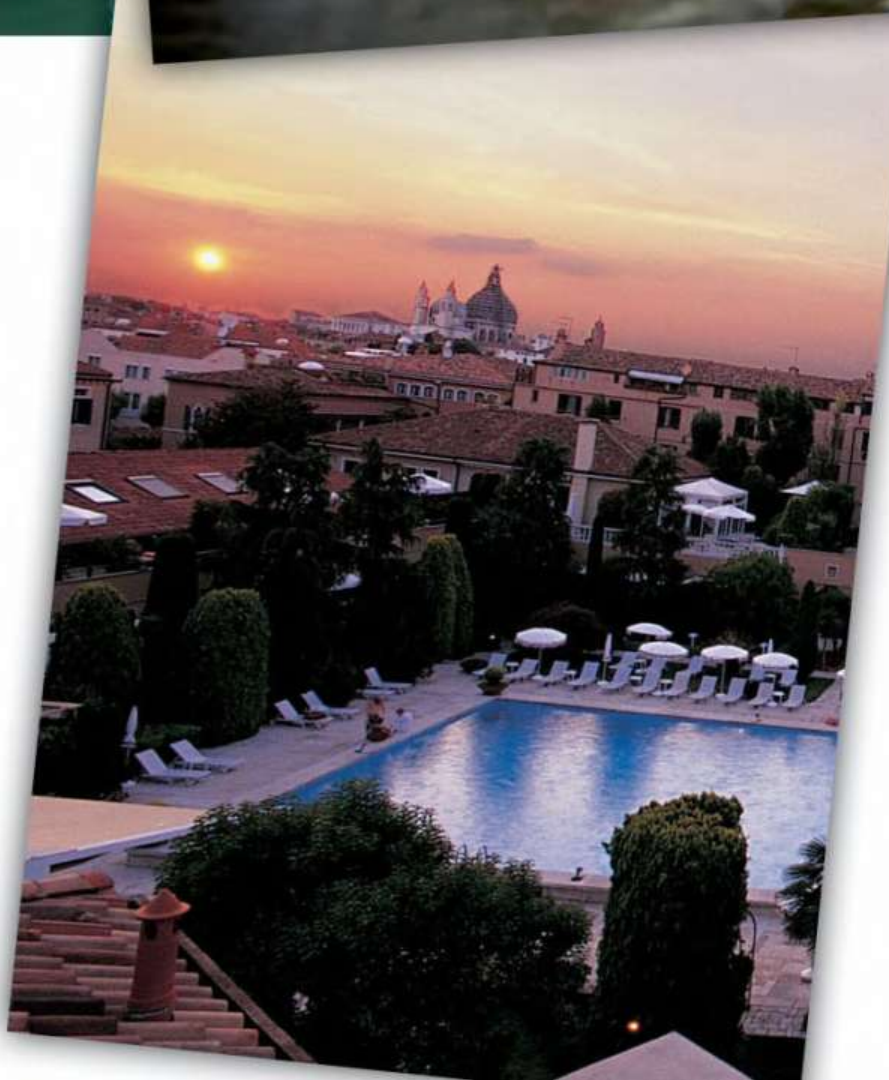


*Clockwise from above left: The entrance to the Belmond Cipriani; Walter awaits with a smile and a drink; the swimming pool at the Belmond Cipriani, with views over the city.*

was all ready to serve him, but he was on his way to a meeting and had just called in to check his hair and appearance in our mirrors.”

The mirrors in the bar were an innovation of which the hotel’s founder, Giuseppe Cipriani did not approve. In 1931 the legendary Mr Cipriani had founded Harry’s Bar in Venice with money advanced to him by a grateful customer called Harry Pickering. Giuseppe Cipriani knew all the great drinkers who came to Venice, including Ernest Hemingway, Orson Welles, and Truman Capote. “He always said that to have lots of mirrors and bright lights in the bar was not a good idea, because women would not be able to relax and enjoy themselves since they would be too busy looking at the signs of age on their faces. He was also opposed to air conditioning because he felt that if clients were not too warm, they would not be thirsty either.”

One guest who has always been easy to deal with has been George Clooney, who has become something of a friend over the years he has been attending Venice’s Film Festival and living in Lake Como. Walter knew of George Clooney’s plans to marry in Italy long before they were announced.





## DISCOVER ITALIA!

*Right: George Clooney arrives with some of his own brand of Tequila, Casamigos, which features in another Belmond Cipriani cocktail, the Goodnight Amigos – Tequila, cranberry juice, Angostura bitters, lime, sugar, cucumber and ginger. Below: View from the hotel.*

“Unfortunately he needed to take over the whole hotel for the wedding and we already had ten people who had booked rooms well in advance, so George had three parties here but the wedding itself at the Aman Canal Grande.”

“I met Amal Alamuddin some years ago. I think I had met three or four ladies that George had brought here, but she was the first one to come forward and greet me. She kissed me and said that she had heard so much about me. She was – and is – a very gracious lady.”

The two men have a long history, which includes the night that George named one of Walter's new cocktails the vodka-based *Buonanotte* after his film *Goodnight and Good Luck* – which had just triumphed at the 2005 Film Festival, and the prosecco-based cocktail *La Nina's Passion* that Walter created in honour of George's mother. Walter is working on a new after-dinner drink that combines Casamigos, Clooney's award-winning tequila, with Recioto (a dessert wine from Valpolicella). He poured me some from the cask, where it is ageing beneath a large mirror. It has the aroma of dark chocolate and, for my money, should make a great dessert wine.

But my favourite Clooney story from Walter remains the one about the night that George, still dressed in his dinner jacket, sat up till 3am drinking with the barstaff and then, having decided he'd had quite enough, got up and calmly walked back to his room – through the hotel swimming pool.

Not all Walter's Cipriani stories involve the famous. This year he's launching a cocktail called the *Lucky Spritz*. “It came about because two men were sitting at the bar discussing this great spritz they'd had in Verona and they asked me if I could make something similar. So I mixed pressed orange and lemon zest, Aperol, Recioto, orange bitters and prosecco. And they said this was better than the Verona spritz and they invited this lady who was sitting at the bar to join them. She did and everyone left very happily. Two years later this lady, she comes back into my bar with one of the men. They were married! And she said it was all down to my spritz. So that is why I decided to call it *Lucky Spritz*.”

I'm pleased to say in our family we tell the story of my stepdaughter having her first ever cocktail mixed for her by Walter, something he did with the same polish and charm he extends to every customer, rich, famous or schoolgirl.

But not all stories end so happily. Walter told me of a Russian couple who arrived late one evening “They had reserved an €8,000-a-night suite. Shortly before retiring to their room, they decided to stop by here for a drink and they made themselves comfortable on a sofa on the terrace and ordered two bottles of expensive, delicious champagne, and they fell asleep in an embrace on the sofa and did not wake until 6 o'clock the following morning. They never had the pleasure of sleeping in their comfortable suite as they woke just in time to have breakfast and check out!”

Walter is now 60 and when he bursts into laughter, he looks very good on it. The Italian government has recently increased the retirement age to 63. But Walter isn't planning to retire any time soon and why would he? He is a man so suited to his work that when he does go, there will be a very large Walter-shaped hole in the Belmond Cipriani Hotel.

We shook hands when it was time for me to slip off my bar stool and return to the heat of the Venetian evening. I thought of telling Walter how impossible it would be to come to Venice and not chat to him over a martini.

But I think he knows that. ■



Photograph © Tyson Sadlo Photographer/Belmond Hotel Cipriani







*George Clooney, still dressed in his dinner jacket, sat up till 3am drinking with the barstaff and then, having decided he'd had quite enough, got up and calmly walked back to his room - through the hotel swimming pool*



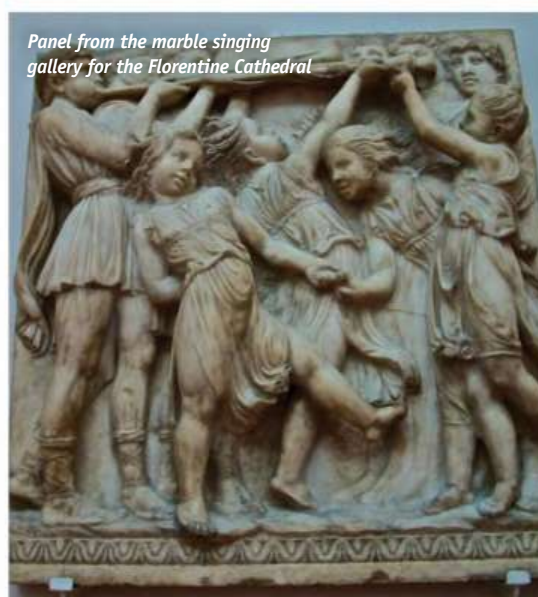
# Luca della Robbia – showing his true colours

*Della Robbia's decorative style was bright and luminous, it was like an amalgamation of painting and sculpture*

In the early 1400s Luca della Robbia created a new artistic decorative option for sculptural and surface decoration: coloured tin-glazed terracotta, and it was a hit! It could be produced more quickly than sculpture in marble and stone, was less costly, and the glaze over the terracotta made it durable enough to weather the elements, making it compatible to both internal altarpieces and external decoration.

This technique was the ingenious and practical response to an ever-increasingly sophisticated and economically rich lifestyle concerned more and more with man's earthly existence, external appearance and secular beauty. How? Firstly, since the 13th century, many Italian city states and urban centres had been experiencing mega make-overs and renovations due to the increase in trade, production and wealth. There existed great civic rivalry amongst these centres, all vying to be the most impressive and innovative. Luca della Robbia's decorative style was bright and luminous; it was like an amalgamation of painting and sculpture, and it was the perfect cheerful addition to the monochrome brickwork façades. A perfect example is his commission from the guilds in Florence for glazed terracotta crests to adorn the important Orsanmichele Church.

Secondly, in the domestic sphere, the early 1400s resurrected the portrait bust, which had lain dormant since Antiquity. Societies which are concerned with the individual and the self carve out a large market for portraiture. Tin glazed terracotta was much cheaper than commissioning a bust in marble and the brilliance of the white glaze catches the light in a way which creates a sense of liveliness and movement as it moves across the surface. The *nouvelle vogue* of immortalising one's image, born out of the renewed importance given to the individual and gained through greater affluence and commercial activity, meant that Luca della Robbia was run off his feet with orders.



Panel from the marble singing gallery for the Florentine Cathedral



Crest on Orsanmichele Church



Swaddled babies on the portico of the Foundling Hospital



Madonna and Child with apple in the Bargello Museum





Glazed terracotta crest adorning  
Orsanmichele Church



Madonna and Child between angels  
(detail) in the Bargello Museum

Luca hailed from a family of wool dyers which explains his strange name. Della Robbia morphed from *rubia tinctorum*, a plant from which a red colour called 'rose madder' was extracted that was used in the dyeing of wool. He trained as a goldsmith and then possibly in sculptural workshops in the city (maybe in the workshop of Nanni di Banco). His first documented commission was for a marble singing gallery destined for the Florentine cathedral, above one of the two sacristies. A commission of such prestige has led historians to assume that Luca had already established a name for himself about town prior to this, but no records have survived.

In the singing gallery his talent for bringing to the fore the soul of the person depicted, rather than simply the flesh, is loudly proclaimed. He is deservedly considered one of the most important Early Renaissance artists precisely because of his ability to depict not only a realistic rendering of a figure in the scene, which in itself was a novelty and a great shift from the Medieval period, but to push beyond the limitations of the eye and transmit the essence of the moment and the emotion of the scene through the choice of gestures and expressions of his figures. Some of his Madonna and Child devotional altarpieces are eternal, so much do they manage to emit the love and melancholy of the Madonna and the playful babyishness of the Child.

In the 1440s, the Florentine Republic urged all households to have an image of the Madonna and Child in every important room in the house in the hope of encouraging a baby boom as the population had dropped to about 40,000. Luca's workshop worked around the clock to meet the demand. His nephew, Andrea, carried on the family *bottega* in Via Guelfa, and then Andrea's son, Giovanni, headed the third generation. Many of the siblings were involved in the artistic production and they boasted a clientele that extended north of the Alps, working also for the French king at Fontainebleau. Luca concentrated on two colours, blue and white, for his work. In later years more colours were added. Interestingly, red is a colour that was very difficult to produce with the glaze. ■



**ABOUT THE WRITER**  
**FREYA MIDDLETON** is a private tour guide and writer who lives in Florence, Tuscany. You can read her blog online or learn more about her tours at [www.freyasflorence.com](http://www.freyasflorence.com)

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# DRIVING, THRIVING, AND SURVIVING



Everyone knows the stereotypes about Italians and driving – fast, impatient, aggressive, appearing to consider red lights as advisory... But there are more specific quirks that may take you by surprise. So, to make your driving experience in Italy a bit more predictable, here's **Gordon Craigie's** Top 10 Italian Driving Habits...

## 1 WAVERING

As you're bowling along the *autostrada* in the outside lane, you're aware that the car you're about to overtake is drifting towards your lane. Oh, wait a mo', they're drifting towards the safety fence, no, they're coming back again... There are usually only two possible explanations for this: they're either drunk, which is rare but not unheard of; but far more likely is that they're glued to their mobile

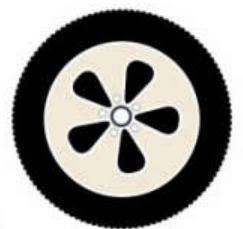
phone – and most probably texting. Yes, it's illegal but, hey, this is Italy. Wait until they're heading towards the inside again then gun past them is my advice.

## 2 STRADDLING

If there's a line on the road, and they're not wavering, then Italians like a good straddle. Particularly evident on the *autostrada*, where even the hard shoulder is fertile territory for an Italian straddler. I have no idea why they do this but it is so widespread I get sick of hearing myself yelling, "Pick a lane, any lane, but stay in it!" several times per journey. However, you'll also witness straddling on single-track country roads too where, if there are no lines, they'll just drive in the middle. Impossible to overtake, and leading to some heart-in-the-mouth moments if you're approaching with only rough terrain or a ditch, hedge or wall on your inside. All you can do here is slow down, get as close in as you can, then pray. It usually works...

## 3 INDICATING

Your average Italian driver definitely looks on indicating as an optional activity. On the rare occasions that an indicator is activated then it is highly likely that it will not be cancelled for many, many kilometres. This is almost compulsory with Piaggio Ape drivers – in fact, I'm certain some Apes come with one permanently flashing indicator as a factory-fitted option. In all cases however, this means that it is not uncommon to see drivers indicate left then turn right and, equally but far more dangerously, indicate right then turn left. They're also very fond of hazard warning lights, and equally fond of not cancelling them either. They are usually, and quite usefully, very quick to bang on the hazards when approaching queuing traffic but, again, they can stay on *ad infinitum* despite the car resuming its 130 km/h cruising speed. My advice? *Never* take any indication as correct and expect the unexpected!







This isn't something that requires a solution; just watch and marvel, and enjoy your coffee.

## 6 INABILITY TO CHANGE GEAR

Another trait perhaps that is best observed from the terrace of a bar. As you try to enjoy your refreshment many cars will pass and somewhere inside your head a little voice will be screaming, "Change up!" or "Second gear!" This particular phenomenon can occur with any car but it is particularly prevalent in what I call the 'Ape GT', which is the saloon version of the Vespa-based Ape. Intriguingly, this car does not require a driving licence... Let us just ponder that for a moment... The sound of its engine is like a straining hairdryer at best but is given zanzare whining levels of annoyance when it is in the hands of a reluctant gear changer. Again, there is no solution; just look, listen and wonder.

## 4 EDGING

Like points 1 & 2 above, this is another line-related problem. What is it with Italians and lines? When approaching any kind of junction they appear to be genetically incapable of stopping on, or before, the stop line. There will always be at least half a metre of car protruding into the carriageway, and very probably still edging out. An extreme version of this occurs mainly with old ladies, the ones with that Italian state-regulated short, permed hairdo (how exactly *do* they all manage to look the same?) who drive around everywhere with the, "If I don't look at you, you're not there," philosophy whilst emerging from side junctions at

little more than 3 km/h. The only way to deal with either situation is to be constantly aware of side junctions and always be ready to brake and/or swerve.

## 5 DISEMBARKING FROM A MOVING CAR

Yes, you read that right, and this is indeed an art form. It can be viewed in many contexts but is easiest to spot when an Italian pulls up at a bar for one of the day's obligatory coffees. You watch: the car slows down, the engine cuts out, the door opens, the driver sets one foot out and then, and only then, the car comes to a dead stop. I have no idea how they do it. I'm sure it's even technically impossible with modern cars, but...

## 7 PARKING

This isn't so much a quirk as a complete failure to recognise that parking doesn't mean just stopping a car randomly with no regard whatsoever for lines, kerbs or the proximity of other vehicles. Parallel parking simply doesn't exist and, especially in big cities, bumpers are for, well, bumping. When combined with 5, above, watching an Italian parking can



be another entertaining coffee bar diversion, as long as your car isn't anywhere nearby! Many newer supermarkets and shopping centres have more structured car parks with, thankfully, bigger spaces, but it is still rare to see an Italian park wholly within a space parallel to the lines and with the wheels left perfectly aligned. In a huge car park, if you decide to park 'away from it all' to avoid any potential difficulties it is absolutely amazing how many times you return to your car to find an Italian parked right next to you in the middle of nowhere. They're also particularly adept at parking only millimetres away from a right hand drive driver's door. The only solution here is to think ahead, choose your parking spot wisely and allow for all eventualities.

truckers and have nowhere to go, they just want you out of their way pronto. In this particular instance your only option is to ignore them and continue your manoeuvre but, when you're ready to move back in, check behind carefully as, and you won't believe this, they may have decided to undertake you at this point! In all other situations just remember the flashing is a warning not a courtesy.

**9 ROUNDABOUTS** Now, roundabouts themselves are not a problem. Me, I'm quite partial to a well-placed roundabout and am actually irrationally saddened at how they seem to be getting phased out in the

UK. Or worse, we're putting traffic lights on the roundabouts and therefore negating the whole point of said roundabout in the first place! Anyway, I digress... Yes, roundabouts are a relatively new institution in Italy but their adoption has been both rapid and widespread. When we first moved here nine years ago there were none. I can still vividly remember my first encounter with an Italian roundabout, and a half-finished one at that... on a cold, dark winter's evening in the middle of nowhere... Now, that *was* a bumpy ride! But, as much as roundabouts have been widely adopted and become part of the scenery, the average Italian's ability to understand, or enact, the required roundabout etiquette ➤



**8 FLASHING** No, not that, but flashing headlights in Italy means the exact opposite of a friendly 'after you Claude' UK-type flash. It means 'get out of the way' and quickly. In fairness, the UK Highway Code still states that headlight flashing should be used as a warning so in this respect the Italians are technically correct. Where you really need eyes in the back of your head is when you're gleefully hurtling down the *autostrada* at, or close to, the limit. You may suddenly be aware of flashing lights behind you that weren't anywhere in your mirror 10 seconds previously but are now within touching distance of your rear bumper. They don't actually care that you are only half-way through overtaking a line of five or six wavering Romanian



has not progressed at an equivalent rate. You can never assume that you have priority when you should and, particularly with the smaller *rotatoria*, you should never assume that your Italian counterpart, whether prioritised or not, will go round, and not over, the roundabout. My only advice here is, once again, to always be aware, be very aware!

**10 MERGING** Italian road engineers must go to very different schools from their UK colleagues. You can quite quickly get used to the short run-offs that constitute many junctions, and develop the ability to effortlessly go from 130 to 50 km/h in the space of 25 metres on a tight curve... But merging? Near where we live they've built a super-duper new shopping centre. Years of planning, state-of-the-art facilities, excellent parking areas... The only problem, and it

is a big one, is the approach roads. As often happens out here you can have two or three lanes coming from one direction meeting two or three lanes coming from another direction; but to get to the shopping centre one set of traffic has to cross three lanes, while the other lot are equally trying to cross three lanes in the other direction. Chaos! Then, immediately after you've navigated that you have to perform a similar operation in the space of 100 metres to reach the one, I'll say it again, *one* lane that enters the aforementioned state of the art shopping centre. Add in Italian speeds, lane discipline, wavering and mobile phones and this probably combines most of the above quirks into one handy, accident-inducing package. I can't give any tips on how to navigate this as it has to be experienced to be believed but, once you've made it through the mayhem, it's best to park straight and within the lines then head for a recuperative coffee, as you've earned it.



YOU MAY HAVE your own possible entries into this list as I'm sure it's not exhaustive. I actually encountered each of the above in one 40-minute journey from Perugia, and I know another day may well yield an entirely different list. But the one thing I know for sure is that this is how it is, so get used to it. There is no point trying to impose our northern European rule-abiding values or getting annoyed or frustrated as this is, quite simply, the Italian way, and... When in Rome... *Buona giornata!* ■





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# Relocation Directory

Relocating to Italy is the dream of many people, but in order to **make that dream a reality** you will need expert advice and consultancy on a range of issues...



## LEGAL ADVICE



**AVV LAURA E PROTTI,  
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Many dream of relocating to Italy, but there are several practical aspects to consider before doing so: finding a job, getting a residency permit, a tax code, registering with a doctor, and learning the language, to name but a few. Those relocating to Italy should also bear in mind the financial and tax implications of their choice.

*It is a good idea to engage the services of a UK dual-qualified solicitor*

It is a good idea to engage the services of a UK dual-qualified solicitor (Italian Avvocato and English Solicitor) early in the process, and certainly before leaving for Italy, in order to obtain proper advice on the interconnection between the Italian and the UK legal systems, the implications for inheritance issues, tax liabilities, capital gains in the UK, as well as UK domicile and citizenship status.

The question of whether to buy or rent is also important. Buying represents a real investment and first-time buyers in Italy can take advantage of fiscal benefits such as *prima casa*, where the rate for stamp duty and VAT (if applicable)

is reduced to 2 per cent rather than 9 per cent. Italy is famous for its red tape and, in light of recently introduced laws, a survey is essential to ascertain not only compliance between the property's factual state and its registration details at the Land Registry offices, but also that no work has been carried out without the necessary permits. The UK dual-qualified lawyer will be able to advise on which documents to ask for and what questions to ask before committing to a purchase, assist in liaising with sellers and/or estate agents, and provide advice on any legally binding documents, requesting any amendments before you sign them.

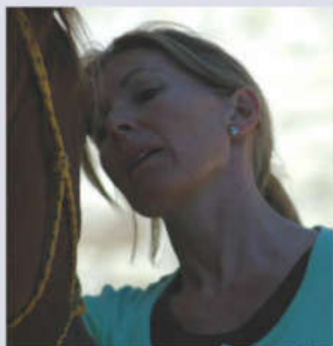


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## FRACTIONAL OWNERSHIP



**DAWN CAVANAGH-HOBBS,  
APPASSIONATA**

Fractional ownership will let you get to know an area without the commitment of buying a place outright. If you are contemplating relocating to Italy, make a list of things that are important to you and your family. Don't buy a property in a remote area if you like to be part of a bustling town and

*We fell in love with 'real Italy', the hill top medieval towns, rolling hills of vineyards, olive groves and sunflowers*

have shops and restaurants within walking distance.

After many years of searching for the ideal place, we moved to the stunning region of Le Marche in 2007. We fell in love with 'real Italy', the hill top medieval towns, rolling hills of vineyards, olive groves and sunflowers. Blue flag beaches are within a 20-minute drive, as are the Sibillini mountains for skiing and sledging. For us it ticked all the boxes for an idyllic location for our family to settle.

Setting up our fractional ownership business,

Appassionata, and working as an interior designer, is a whole different experience in Le Marche. Initially it was hard to find suppliers and my working hours changed too. Businesses still close for four hours over lunchtime and more often than not I would have to drive for miles to check out one of the many local artisans, but it was always worth it.

The last few years have been exciting, frustrating, glorious and challenging, but I wake up every morning, throw open the shutters and realise how lucky we are to live here.



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## ACCOUNTANCY



**STEFANO SERRANI,  
GEDA SRL**

If you are living or going to live in Italy it is essential that you fully understand the Italian tax laws; you can't ignore them!

The tax system may seem complicated and confusing but with the help of an accountant it is quite straight forward to comply with the rules.

It is important to start understanding what you must

*It is important to start understanding what you must do before you decide to purchase a house in Italy, then you are prepared and the whole process of moving can run smoothly*

do before you decide to purchase a house in Italy, then you are prepared and the whole process of moving can run smoothly, and you won't experience any unexpected demands.

There are several taxes you have to pay, such as IMU (council tax), IVAFE (overseas financial resources), IVA (VAT) if you are opening a business, as well as obligations like obtaining a *codice fiscale*, and making an annual tax return.

Stefano Serrani of Geda SRL, based in Macerata, Le Marche, is an Italian chartered accountant who speaks fluent English. He recommends that anyone intending to live or already living in Italy should contact an accountant who can fully explain to them the ins and outs of the 'Monti' tax system. By doing this the process will be handled smoothly and you should then have no worries about your tax liabilities in Italy.



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*Clockwise from top left: View of the Loredan from its garden; the rooftop swimming pool at the Stucky family room at the Loredan; Murano chandelier at the Sant'Antonin; the courtyard of the Orologio; the Aman Canal Grande; back at the Loredan; the bar of the Orologio*





48 HOURS IN...

# New Venice

Like anywhere, Venice is a city in flux. **Adrian Mourby** makes a tour of some of the new hotels that have sprung up recently...

Getting off the vaporetto at Rialto Mercato, I walk through the old fish market to where until recently the offices of the Tribunale stood. The building is still there, set back from the Canal Grande by a quayside of tables and chairs but it displays a new sign, L'O, which stands for Hotel Orologio. It's just one of many buildings in Venice that have been converted into hotels in the past year. This one was designed by Roberto Baciocchi (who designs Prada stores) for Sandro Fratini, the watch-loving president of Rifle Jeans company. Sandro Fratini is a fan of *Haute Horlogerie* (Fine Watchmaking). The interior of his new hotel is almost entirely red and black, enlivened by splashes of circular colour in giant watch faces designed by Rolex and Patek Philippe.

According to General Manager Cristiano Fortuna, it took three years to turn these abandoned offices on the Grand Canal into a 43-room hotel. That was quick for Venice but Mr Fratini dealt with the combined levels of Italian and Venetian bureaucracy by starting on restoration work at the same time as applying for permission to open an hotel. Work was therefore well advanced by the time





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Did Peggy Guggenheim buy too many pictures too quickly? Whatever you may think of the quality there's no doubting the presence of De Chirico, Braque, Duchamp, Dalí, Miró, Picasso, Brâncuși, Giacometti, Kandinsky, Klee, Magritte, Mondrian and Max Ernst, Peggy's former husband. The building, the Palazzo Venier dei Leoni (also known as the *Palazzo Non Finito*), is the Grand Canal's only bungalow palace. Had it been completed it would have dominated the Canal.

### SQUERO DI SAN TROVASO ❷

Dorsoduro, 1097

The last gondola workshop in Venice still functions today among a small cluster of what look like Alpine farmhouses. (The men who arrived in Venice to work here in the 17th century came from the Dolomites.) Behind the workshop stands the troubled San Trovaso Church, which has fallen down once and burned down twice. It has two identical façades, one was built for the Nicolotti and the other for the Castellani, two factions who fought so furiously it was not thought sensible to have them using the same entrance.

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In 1935 the city of Venice bought this 17th-century palace on the Grand Canal as a museum for 18th-century art, which is how it functions today. The name comes from a family of bankers who took over when the builders, the Bon family, ran out of funds. Before becoming a museum the palazzo was rented out to Robert 'Pen' Browning, James McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent and even Cole Porter.

### BASILICA DEI SANTI GIOVANNI E PAOLO ❹

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Except for its Renaissance main door and high altar this basilica is entirely Gothic – and excitingly so in a city where Neo-Classical architecture dominates. In the 91-metre nave are the tombs of 25 Venetian doges and a memorial to Doge Sebastiano Venier, who led the Venetian fleet to victory at the decisive Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Outside the basilica stands one of Venice's rare equine statues, commemorating Bartolomeo Colleoni who successfully commanded the Venetian army against Milan in the 15th century.



*The Piano Nobile at the Loredan*

## DON'T MISS

### THE DANIELI WINE SUITE

The top of the Danieli Hotel has one of the best panoramic views in Venice and, since a recent major refurbishment, offers not just its Terrazza Restaurant but a designated Wine Suite where, in a gracious room resembling a library of the senses, the hotel's sommeliers offer a wine pairing menu. At times it can be difficult to tell which is best: the wine, the food or the views of Bacino San Marco. Hotel Danieli, Riva degli Schiavoni, 4196 ☎ +39 041 782 786 [www.danieli.winesuite.com](http://www.danieli.winesuite.com)

permission for a new hotel, close to the Rialto Bridge, was given.

"Venice is developing more hotels all the time," says Fortuna, offering me a glass of prosecco. "We need more hotels, especially in the Season, and there is a big development in apartments and B&Bs at the moment. Of course, there is a danger that Venice will become a city of museums and hotels, but out of season it does not feel like that."

Every time I come back to Venice I find new hotels, but this is hardly surprising. It's now estimated that 90 per cent of Venetians work in some aspect of tourism. They may serve in shops or restaurants, they may drive water taxis or steer gondolas, they may make carnival masks or guide tour groups round, but tourism is now the essence of what was once an independent maritime republic.

Even those who resist turning their properties into hotels find

*Tourism is now the essence of what was once a fierce independent maritime trading republic*

L'Orologio is new in the way that it does not reference Venice at all in its décor. The lights over the small breakfast bar are clusters of black glass tubes, there are black lavatories in many en suites and the glass display case that separates reception from the bar contains a skull encrusted with diamonds that Mrs Fratini donated. There is not a single carnival mask or fringed glass chandelier in sight.

the tourist dollar seeks them out. The other side of the Rialto, I call in at the Palazzo Loredan dell'Ambasciatore, where Filippo Gaggia shows me round his family's gargantuan home. The Palazzo Loredan is one of the few family-owned palazzos on the Grand Canal that has not become a hotel, museum, apartment block or offices. In fact, according to Philippe, there are probably now no more than six





View from one of the Loredan apartments



The Aman gardens



The Orologio

now out of approximately 50. Even in the 19th century these massive palazzos were costing too much to maintain privately (many are the size of a city block and the humidity of Venice exacts a huge toll in maintenance). So the old wealthy families, who over the centuries had produced doge after doge, retreated to their country estates on the mainland and rented their palazzos out quite cheaply to visitors like Lord Byron, Robert Browning, Henry James, Richard Wagner, Marcel Proust and John Singer Sargent.

The Gaggia family have, however, reversed this trend. At the beginning of the 20th century, Filippo's great grandfather, having made his fortune (via an electricity company and hotel chain) bought the 15th-century palazzo, the former home of Doge Francesco Loredan (1685-1762). As Filippo's father never wanted to live in Venice, the palazzo passed to this wealthy young man (you have to be wealthy to maintain a palazzo in Venice) and he is determined to keep it as a single home. He has resisted very lucrative offers to sell up and create a hotel like the Aman Canal

Grande, one of his near neighbours, but he does rent out the *piano nobile* for balls, and a number of attic rooms, where the servants once lived, as luxurious holiday lets. Apartments are the coming thing in Venice as the city runs out of *palazzi* to convert.

Weaving down the Grand Canal across small brick bridges and avoiding dead-ends, I come to the Aman, which is rather like the makeover 'After' shot to the Loredan's 'Before'. Catapulted to worldwide fame as the venue for George Clooney's 2014 wedding, it has no sign advertising that it is now a hotel and the locals still refer to it as the Palazzo Papadopoli. It was bought in 1864 by Counts Niccolò and Angelo Papadopoli, who modernised the palazzos, putting in an extra grand staircase so they had one each. They also demolished the adjacent property to create a garden alongside the canal and a new wing set back behind it. In 1922 the palazzo passed to the heirs of Papadopoli, the Gonzaga Counts. The Count Giberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga rents it to the Indonesian hotel group, Aman, while retaining an apartment

## DON'T MISS

**HARRY'S BAR**  
A legend because of its famous clientele, superb cocktails and impeccable service, Harry's is a place where nothing is rushed and getting a table can take forever. One customer, on finally being seated, exclaimed "Now I can die!" But if Hemingway, Capote and Welles didn't mind the crush neither should you. Calle Vallaresso ☎ +39 041 528 5777 [www.harrysbarvenezia.com](http://www.harrysbarvenezia.com)

➤ **KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES** (full meal per person, not including wine)  
€ Up to €25  
€€ €26-€50  
€€€ More than €50

## WHERE TO EAT

### CAFFÈ QUADRI 5

Piazza San Marco  
☎ +39 041 522 2105

[francesco.trevisan@caffequadri.it](mailto:francesco.trevisan@caffequadri.it)

The Alajmo family has created one of the best restaurants on San Marco, one that is popular with Venetians as well as the likes of Brad Pitt, Woody Allen and Roman Abramovich. Francesco, the manager, is renowned for his elegance and professionalism, while Chef Silvio Giavedoni's specialities include 'Buratta cheese ravioli with seafood stew', 'Mezzi paccheri pasta with raw fish, cherry tomato juice, capers and basil' and 'scartosso de pesse' a Venetian-style fried fish.

€ € €

### ORO RESTAURANT 6

Belmond Hotel Cipriani  
☎ +39 041 240801

[www.belmond.com](http://www.belmond.com)

Recently refurbished by Adam Tihany, Oro seeks to capture the romance of Venice beneath handmade Murano glass chandeliers and a decadent gold ceiling. 2-star Michelin Chef Davide Bisetto was lured back home from Corsica to create a menu of imaginative dishes inspired by Italian tradition but presented in an exceptional way. One reviewer compared his 'white asparagus with mayonnaise, tuna, squid ink and mullet' to a painting by Jackson Pollock.

€ € €

### DOPOLAVORO DINING ROOM 7

Isola delle Rose  
☎ +39 041 296 8111

[www.jwvenice.com](http://www.jwvenice.com)

Impeccable service and a real enthusiasm for food mark the debut of JW Marriott's fine dining room on Isola delle Rose. 2-Michelin Star Chef Giancarlo Perbellini's five-course tasting menu is a revelation. There is a dock in front of the restaurant if you're coming by water taxi, otherwise take the regular free shuttle from San Marco.

€ € €

### L'ALCOVA 8

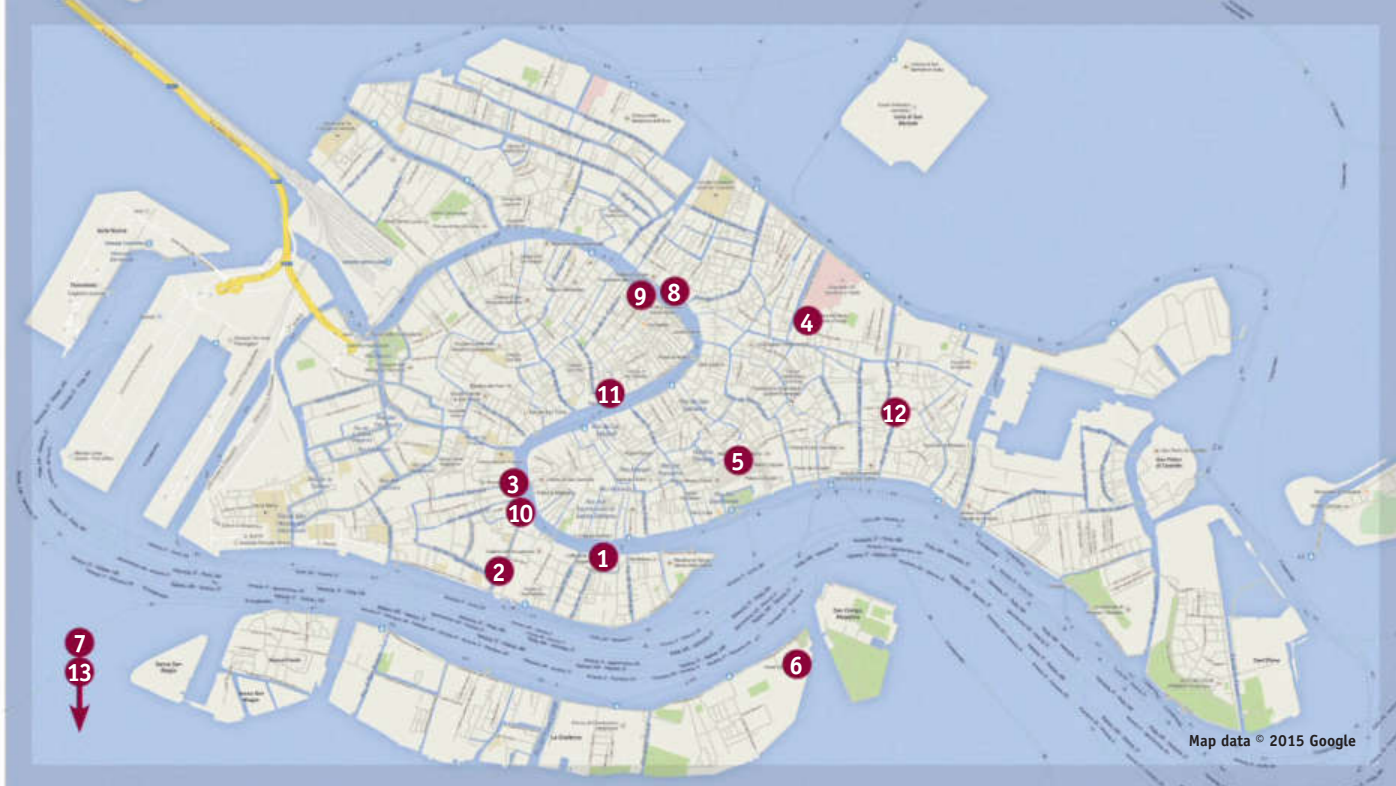
Ca'Sagredo Hotel  
☎ +39 041 241 3111

[www.casagredohotel.com](http://www.casagredohotel.com)

With a wonderful location on the Grand Canal, L'Alcova is the brainchild of Turinese chef Michele Potenza who attends the nearby Rialto market daily as part of his 'Natural Flavours' philosophy. His fresh twist on authentic Venetian cuisine involves transforming everyday ingredients like ravioli and cod into truly delectable dishes like 'buckwheat ravioli filled with rocket and cod' and 'row fish from Rialto'.

€ € €





## DON'T MISS

### ARTE MODERNA RAVAGNAN

You'd have to be wealthy to buy the splendid modern art on show in this tiny gallery close to Caffè Florian but the proprietor is always happy to chat and who knows? One day you may have a few thousand euros to spare. Look out for Ludovico De Luigi's *Impossible Venice* paintings that show San Marco as a golf course or the Campanile encased in an iceberg.

Piazza San Marco  
☎ +39 041 520  
3021 [www.ravagnan-gallery.com](http://www.ravagnan-gallery.com)

for himself. The restoration of the property cost an undisclosed fortune and is exquisite, but great pains have been gone to so that it still looks like a family home. There is no signage (you have to know which gate to open into the garden) and all the new facilities – including a glorious wooden bar and well-equipped library – are made of freestanding units that could be removed tomorrow if the Count decided he wanted his palazzo back.

Further down the Canal, tucked away behind Piazza San Marco in Castello, a different new hotel has recently opened close to the Church of Sant'Antonin on the Canal Rio de la Pleta. Unusually, Palazzo Sant'Antonin takes the name of the church next door rather than of the Scarpa family, who bought this 13-bedroom house in 1889.

When the grandmother of the current owner, Elena Scarpa, was dying she implored her family to keep on their home in some form, so they tried to raise money from banks to create a small hotel. Sitting with my second glass of prosecco of the morning I listened as Elena told me about the eight years it took to complete the conversion. "First we went to the banks but when that failed we found a business partner who already owned a hotel nearby. But still work proceeded slowly because Italian regulations are a disaster. If we had built from nothing we would have spent less money!"

The appeal of Palazzo Sant'Antonin lies in the fact that all its bedrooms remain the same shape as they were when the Scarpa family moved in and all its furniture is originals collected by Elena's sea captain great-grandfather on his travels. Its appeal also lies in its garden – one of the largest in private hands in Venice – which was created by Elena's father and grandfather, who had worked on a lot of classic Venetian gardens, including that of the Guggenheim.

Rocco, the hotel's concierge, who clearly loves his job, escorts me through the courtyard back to Rio de la Pleta. "The most important thing was to preserve the silence," he tells me as I leave. "Sometimes I feel that I am like a priest in a church." Certainly Sant'Antonin is a perfect retreat from the gaudy commercial maelstrom of San Marco.

I have one more new hotel to look at today and that is out across the lagoon. At Riva degli Schiavoni I board a black and white launch emblazoned with the logo JW Marriott Resort and Spa. As we head across Bacino San Marco I can see one of my favourite conversions at the far end of Giudecca. In 2007 the old Stucky flour mill, having lain empty for years, was transformed (after the inevitable fire that accompanies so many Italian building projects) into the 379-room Hilton Molino Stucky, a hugely popular complex with a

superb rooftop swimming pool from which you can look down on those monstrous cruise ships that churn up the Giudecca Canal.

But I'm heading out beyond this, past Hotel Cipriani and beyond the St Regis Hotel, which occupies San Clemente Island, to the most recent of hotel developments in Venice. The JW Marriott, which opened in March 2015, sits on Isola delle Rose. This is the new, more romantic, name for Sacca Sessola (Scoop Bag Island) which was created in the 19th century out of waste material dumped on the bed of the lagoon. After having been first used as a fuel dump, the island became a sanatorium in the 20th century and finally in 2000 was sold off to be converted into a new private hotel complex in the lagoon. When the work started, it took only four years to transform the island and the hotel is now doing great business among American tourists who want to combine the comforts of a resort with reasonable access to tourist sights (the launch shuttle crosses to San Marco every thirty minutes). The designer Matteo Thun has managed to create a very spacious and serene complex by reusing the shells of the various sanatorium buildings to create 250 rooms and suites.

Venice may officially be sinking in the lagoon, but from a hotel point of view it's getting bigger all the time – and next year there will be even more. ■





The rooftop of the JW Marriott



Interior courtyard at the Sant'Antonin



The Dopolavoro



Family pool at the JWM



Outside the Stucky on the Giudecca Canal

## WHERE TO STAY

### HOTEL L'OROLOGIO VENEZIA <sup>9</sup>

Riva de L'Ogio, 1777

☎ +39 041 272 5800

[www.hotelorologiovenezia.com](http://www.hotelorologiovenezia.com)

### PALAZZO LOREDAN DELL'AMBASCIATORE <sup>10</sup>

Calle Cerchieri, 1250

Contact via "Views on Venice"

☎ +39 041 520 2702

[www.vovcollection.com](http://www.vovcollection.com)

### AMAN CANAL GRANDE VENICE <sup>11</sup>

Calle Tiepolo, 1364

☎ +39 041 270 7333

[www.amanresorts.com](http://www.amanresorts.com)

### HOTEL SANT'ANTONIN <sup>12</sup>

Sestiere Castello, 3299

☎ +39 041 523 1621

[www.hotelsantantonin.com](http://www.hotelsantantonin.com)

### JW MARRIOTT VENICE RESORT & SPA <sup>13</sup>

Isola delle Rose

☎ +39 041 296 8111

[www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)

## GETTING THERE

### ➤ BY TRAIN

Railbookers (☎ 020 3780 2222, [www.railbookers.com](http://www.railbookers.com)) offer return train journeys to Venice with one night in Zurich en route and two nights in Venice from £749 per person.

### ➤ BY PLANE

Fly to Venice from Birmingham, Dublin, Edinburgh, Leeds Bradford, London Gatwick, Heathrow, Luton and Southend, and Manchester. Fly to Treviso from Bristol, Dublin, East Midlands, Leeds Bradford and London Stansted.





€500,000-€750,000

## ARONA

Situated in the hills above Arona, Lake Maggiore, in a wonderful environment with fabulous lake views, an interesting villa of 200 sqm with 1,000 sqm of grounds. Included within the villa is a small apartment for guests, while the main accommodation provides a living room, kitchen, three bedrooms, two bathrooms and a large terrace.

Price €540,000 Contact [www.sallitaliaproPERTIES.com](http://www.sallitaliaproPERTIES.com)



€50,000-€100,000

## VINCHIO

The property is in a small cluster of houses just outside the hilltop village of Vinchio, known for its Barbera and Saracen asparagus. Accessed by a private driveway, and completely fenced, the property enjoys beautiful views and good privacy. With 2,500 sqm of land the house consists of kitchen, dining room, living room and bathroom on the ground floor, and two large bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. The old hayloft is partly renovated. The old cantina, built into the ground and with beautiful vaulted ceilings, is used for storage. There is an addition to the house in the back which also could become further habitation, as could the spacious garage in front. The house is empty and in need of upgrading throughout. Ref: CP-698 Price €98,000 Contact [caseinpiemonte@gmail.com](mailto:caseinpiemonte@gmail.com) [www.caseinpiemonte.com](http://www.caseinpiemonte.com)

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€100,000-€200,000

## MAGOGNINO

Having panoramic views of the lake, an attic apartment situated within the small district of Magognino which is above the larger town of Stresa, Lake Maggiore. The apartment of 85 sqm comprise of: hall, living room with fireplace, small kitchen, small terrace with lake views, two bedrooms (one of which is located within the roof area) and bathroom. Central heating is installed and a covered parking space completes this apartment.

Price €175,000 Contact [www.sallitaliaproPERTIES.com](http://www.sallitaliaproPERTIES.com)



€100,000-€200,000

## NIZZA MONFERRATO

In one of our most panoramic positions, with breath taking views over the rolling hills and surrounded by vineyards, we find this classic Piemonte farmhouse to be renovated. The property has a spectacular and dominating position within walking distance to the well-known market town of Nizza Monferrato. This is a typical "double-cascina", with the habitation at the front and cantina at the back, stables and hayloft to the side. The habitation consists of two rooms downstairs and four bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. More potential can be realized from the hayloft, stables and *porticato*. Surrounding the cascina is approx. 4,000 sqm of land, the access on a private road flanked by vineyards. Ref: CR-663 Price €200,000 Contact [caseinpiemonte@gmail.com](mailto:caseinpiemonte@gmail.com) [www.caseinpiemonte.com](http://www.caseinpiemonte.com)





€200,000-€300,000

### SALA COMACINA

These last few 2 bedroom apartments form part of a newly built small residence of 14 apartments in three buildings, located in one of the most sought after areas of Lake Como at Sala Comacina and benefitting from magnificent lake views. All the spacious apartments provide the following accommodation: Spacious living room with corner kitchen, 2 bedrooms and bathroom. Each apartment benefits from a terrace, garden, or both, and use of the shared swimming pool and would make an excellent rental investment. There is also the possibility, if required, to join 2 apartments together to provide one larger apartment. The apartments are less than an hour from Milan's Malpensa airport and just a little more from Bergamo and Linate. Ref: 3796

Price €215,000-€295,000 Contact ☎ 01322 660 988 [www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)



€200,000-€300,000

### VILLANOVA

Magnificent apartments, of which only two remain for sale, built to the highest standards, certified to an A+ standard of energy efficiency, in Villanova, Borca di Cadore, 8km south of Cortina d'Ampezzo, ideal for skiing in winter and hiking in the summer. The wooden building has triple glazing, underfloor heating, ceramic tiles and centralised pellet-fired boiler to achieve a maximum heating cost of €350 per annum. Currently available are two top floor apartments with open plan living room with kitchen to view, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, terrace, cellar and parking. €290,000 and €300,000. The properties have just been completed and are ready for occupation. Ref: 3448

Price €290,000-€300,000 Contact ☎ 01322 660 988 [www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)



€300,000-€400,000

### SOMERARO

This lovely 3 bedroom property is located in the lovely area of Someraro, which is just above the town of Stresa on Lake Maggiore, and has superb views over the Gulf of Borromeo, yet is only about 1 hour from Milan Malpensa airport. The property provides spacious accommodation over two floors and includes: entrance hall, very airy open plan living room with corner kitchen, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, spacious covered veranda and private garden. The villa, which forms part of small residential complex, benefits from air conditioning and has superb views over the lake. An excellent investment for both personal use or as rental potential. Ref: 3330

Price €350,000 Contact ☎ 01322 660 988 [www.casatravella.com](http://www.casatravella.com)



€200,000-€300,000

### GIUDECCA

Beautiful one bedroom apartment set on the island of Giudecca, in the Venetian Lagoon, in a charming new development. The apartment is set on the first floor of the building and is composed of entrance, sitting room with kitchen corner, master bedroom, bathroom, storage/utility room. Complete with air conditioning and central heating, it is being sold partially furnished. Very bright and cosy. Charming communal garden. Ref: 154c

Price €240,000

Contact ☎ +39 349 452 0481

[info@propertiesinitaly.net](mailto:info@propertiesinitaly.net)

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# ADLER THERMAE

Thermal waters, a full gymnasium and lots of outdoor activities in perfect countryside enticed **Sarah Lindsay** to take the family to a spa resort in Tuscany...





*The resort benefits from the quintessential pristine views you come to expect from Tuscany, a postcard perfect sea of rolling green hills that envelops the hotel*

Photography on these pages © Adler Thermæ

**Above: The Spa is set in the heart of the Val d'Orcia, a World Heritage Site, and its thermal pools offer views over the surrounding countryside**

**A**dler Thermæ Spa Resort is set in the heart of the southern Tuscan countryside; the Val d'Orcia, in which the Spa is sited, was awarded UNESCO World Heritage status in 2004. As this would suggest, the resort benefits from the quintessential pristine views you come to expect from Tuscany: a postcard perfect sea of rolling green hills that envelops the hotel, juxtaposed with soldier-like cypress trees standing to attention against the azure skyline; in parts it feels as though the land has been this way for eons. Within the confines of the resort the spectacular 360-degree views can be enjoyed from many a vista, be it the pool area, terrace bar, balconies and even the outdoor treadmills. Stunning scenery aside however, the hotel has so much more to offer.

#### WELLNESS

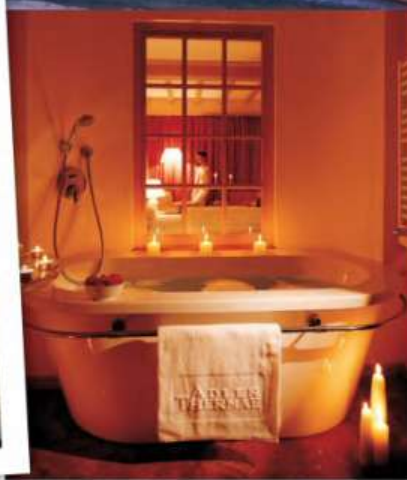
Adler Thermæ sits on a natural spring which has powerful, naturally healing minerals; the thermal waters of Bagno Vignoni are supposed to help with arthritis, osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, back pain, venous diseases and cellulite, as well as gynaecological and skin complaints. The whole ethos of the hotel is based on these healing properties; at the heart of the hotel is

a huge thermal bathing pool which hosts Jacuzzi-style seats and massaging jet fountains.

In the Spa reception area you can help yourself to a bountiful supply of spring water on tap, herbal teas and fresh fruit. The inner sanctum of the Spa boasts a stunning and peaceful relaxation area (no under-12s allowed), with a small lake at its centre surrounded by a boardwalk on which sun beds and loungers are sporadically placed. Adjacent to the boardwalk are communal chill-out rooms, which are enthusiastically populated by those wishing to leave the outside world behind for a few hours. The spa treatment rooms themselves also look out onto the small lake and the endless 'menu' of treatments encompasses everything from traditional massages and beauty therapies to very specific medically advised/consulted treatments from one of the on-site doctors who are at your disposal.

I indulged in one of Adler's signature treatments, the "Bacchus ritual", which is dubbed as part of the Vinothérapie. I confess, with the word wine in the name of the treatment I was more than keen and intrigued to give it a go. Costing €119 for 100 minutes I was scrubbed from head to toe in fine grape seed salts that exfoliate the skin. I was then guided into a massaging jet bath which





was topped up with a glass of local Brunello wine and a handful of salts, which is designed to draw out the toxins. After 30 minutes relaxing in the hot bubbling wine, I was guided to the massage table and handed a further glass of Brunello – which luckily this time I was to allowed drink – all the while enjoying a further relaxing full body massage. I would highly recommend it – and furthermore, if you are looking to share the experience the treatment is also available for couples. If a treatment is not for you then within the spa area and around the hotel you can further relax and detox in a variety of saunas, steam rooms and grottos.

The wellness doesn't stop at the spa and thermal waters: Adlerfit offers a gym and a fitness programme, everything from yoga classes, TRX to hydro bikes in the main pool – spin classes in the water. Don't fear, the classes in the pool are not loud and intrusive; they're a far cry from Benidorm-style aqua aerobics. But if they aren't your thing you can sign up to a personal fitness coach or go for a run on the hotel Parkour route.

## EXCURSIONS

Sticking with the fitness theme for a moment longer, the hotel offers almost daily excursions. Walking tours

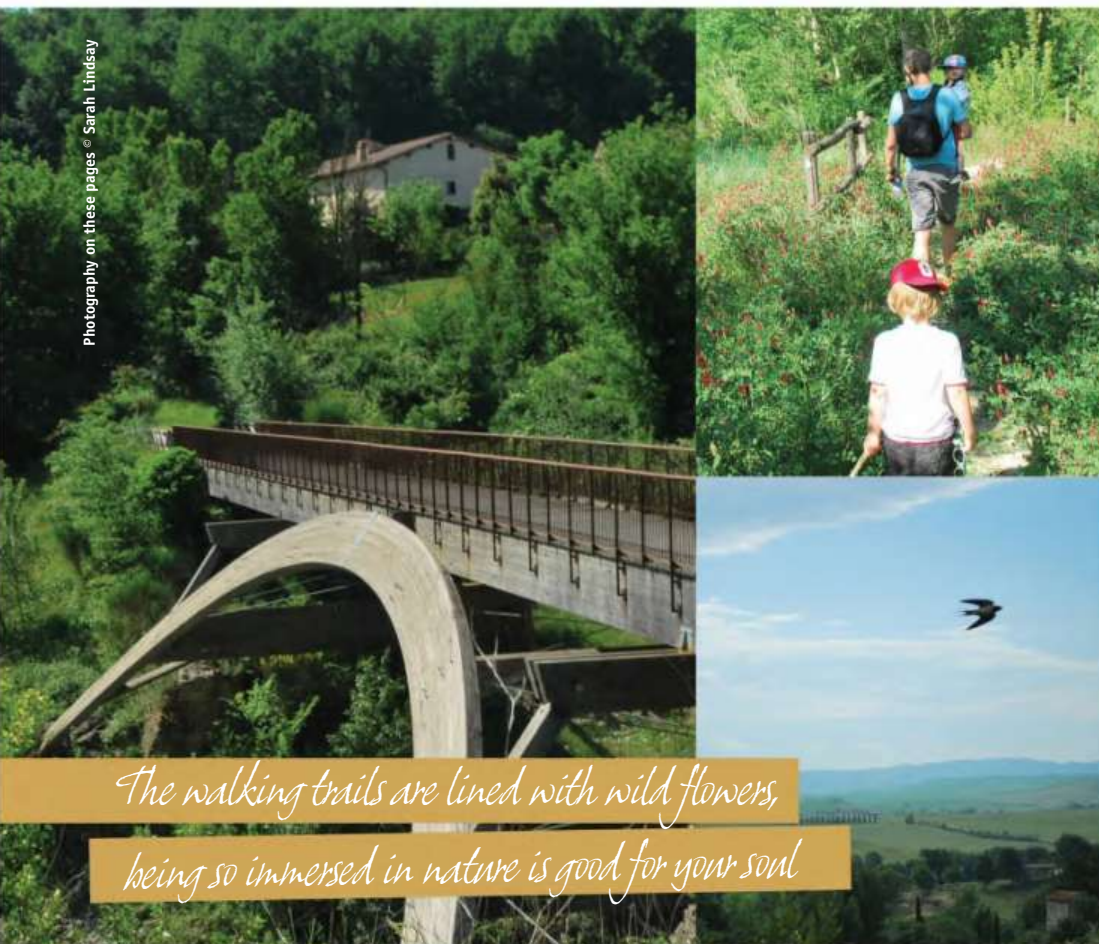
which can vary from 6km to 11km, giving you the opportunity to sample local wines and cheeses such as *pecorino*, all whilst taking in the breath-taking scenery and discovering the local towns and villages.

There are tours both on mountain bikes or E-bikes (free to hire) – the E-bikes are the perfect way for those who are not quite feeling bike-fit to still have the opportunity to get out and about exploring the countryside on two wheels. Again, if you are not a fan of group activities, both the mountain bikes and E-bikes are available to take out as you wish, and there are plenty of trails all on the doorstep of the hotel, both for walks and mountain bike rides. Thermae Adler have also produced a really helpful app you can download which will furnish you with all the routes and trails, combined with a GPS tracker which will lead you from the hotel and back again – make sure your battery is charged!

We ventured out as a family on the mountain bikes with the baby seats on the back to explore the locale and found ourselves immediately in the surrounding stunning landscape taking in beautiful bridges spanning idle rivers whilst enjoying the many varieties of flora and fauna. If a faster method of self-propelled sight-seeing is more to your liking, Adler will set you

*Clockwise from top left, this page: The restaurant has a sliding roof; enjoying the waters; a room strewn with petals; a guest enjoying a mud pack; a typical bathroom; one of the Spa's relaxation rooms*





*The walking trails are lined with wild flowers,  
being so immersed in nature is good for your soul*

*Clockwise from top left, this page: The countryside is full of spectacular surprises; hiking through meadows; a day out on the bikes; a swallow darts across the evening sky*

up on a carbon Bianchi road bike (surcharge applies) with a local guide to show you all that the Tuscan countryside has to offer. There is the option for a group tour or, if you are unsure of other participants, abilities, private tours can also be undertaken. Road cycling is so intrinsically linked with the national identity and it is a great way to get out into the heart of the region, so if you are keen to be king of the roads this option comes highly recommended.

#### NATURE

I whole heartily believe that as well as the thermal waters and spa treatments available, the natural setting of the hotel really makes you feel at one with nature and that that fully contributed towards my relaxation during my stay. Set within the grounds of the hotel is a huge garden you can explore; there is everything from babbling brooks and kitchen gardens to vineyards.

Whilst supping on the evening's aperitif (of which there is a new one to discover each night) from the elevated aspect of the terrace bar, you can enjoy watching the swifts and swallows swooping, diving and skimming the swimming pool. From our bedroom balcony we could sit and listen to a chorus of croaking

frogs, crickets and songbirds. Outside the grounds of the hotel the walking trails are lined with wild flowers; being so immersed in nature is good for your soul, especially if you have children in tow participating in gecko hunts – you can feel the exertion of modern life sloughing away as each day passes.

#### FAMILY

Although the hotel is a spa resort it welcomes families and has everything in place to accommodate them. A play park in the grounds, a large paddling pool, video room for teenagers to hang out and the Aki Kids Club – for ages 4 and above. Aki is available from 9.30am to 10pm most days, offering traditional activities such as painting, games, movie time to more alternative pursuits such as yoga and horse riding (additional cost of €15). Children are welcome to dine separately in the Aki Club and the restaurant is happy for you to enter a little earlier than 7pm if you have young children who cannot wait to tuck into the perfectly designed children's menu.

#### GOURMET

There is such an emphasis on health and fitness that the restaurant offers the option of a low-calorie menu





on request. Wanting to experience all the luxuries that the hotel offered I didn't opt for this. But every evening there is salad buffet to start and always a cleansing juice, which I of course made sure I tucked into.

The menu is largely traditionally Italian. The local dishes are denoted with a small cypress tree illustration next to the description so you can ensure your choice is authentic to the region. With dishes such as sublime saffron risotto, handmade *pici* pasta, and rich wild boar on polenta you really are spoilt for choice. At the end of every meal the huge dessert buffet and cheese board offered such an expansive choice that I could never walk away with just the one dessert as there were just too many temptations – the children particularly enjoyed the evening there was a chocolate fountain!

To accompany all these mouth-watering choices was an extensive 39-page wine list – I just wouldn't know where to start and finish with this so we deferred to our waiter for recommendations.

#### LOCATION

The resort is just a five-minute walk along a nature path to the stunning hamlet of Bagno Vignoni, at the heart of which stands an ancient communal thermal bath, around

which are sporadically placed restaurants, *pizzerie* and *gelaterie* to keep the local tourist population refreshed.

Adler is perfectly positioned to explore the World Heritage hill-top towns that are spread throughout the Val d'Orcia. All within easy reach by car there is the quaint Pienza, Montepulciano, Montalcino and the majestic Siena. It is no wonder this valley was made a World Heritage site: the landscape is breath-taking and in perfect harmony with the Renaissance hill top towns. It has something to offer all ages and interests, from the walkers and cyclists to painters, photographers, historians and families.

It is this diversity of what the region can offer which is probably why the hotel has such a mix of generations. Being well placed to offer a mix of activities the hotel has managed to tap into this mass market, making it an ideal place for relaxation for all ages, nationalities and hobbyists. Adler Thermae is one of the few resorts that has got it right on every level, offering total wellbeing, relaxation, fitness, location and high quality dining. I am confident it is the only holiday I have been on that I have over-indulged in good food and wine and actually lost weight, perhaps apart from a skiing holiday, which is lucky as Adler has a sister hotel in the Dolomites! ■

*Clockwise from top left, this page: Playground activities for the kids; they can get involved in the spa treatments too; a mill house; a cycle tour group rests up; the children will never get bored*









# IL PONTE DELLE SIRENETTE

'The Mermaid Bridge' used to stand at what is now the Via Visconti di Modrone, in the Navigli district of Milan, and was moved to the Parco Sempione when its work on the canals was done...

**T**he Mermaid Bridge, by Francesco Tettamanzi, was inaugurated on 23 June 1842 in the presence of Archduke Rainer Joseph of Austria, Viceroy of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. It is a lowered arch with four statues, one at each end of the bridge's two parapets. The statues are in cast iron and depict mermaids, each holding an oar. At that time the bridge stood on the old canals of Milan, and was only moved

to its current location in the Sempione Park, close to the Castello Sforzesco, when the urban section of the Naviglio Martesana was covered over under the orders of Mussolini. The mermaids and their oars symbolise the State's dominion over nature. We are a very long way from the sea here, and some way from any river of importance, yet the canals of Milan provided navigable waterways for centuries before the likes of Thomas Telford, for example, even dreamed of the idea. ■



# The Jewelled Lady



Photography © Pat Gartman

*The Theodora mosaic panel  
in the Basilica of San Vitale*

She lived in an era of great change, and experienced great changes in her own life too.

**Joe Gartman** visits Ravenna to uncover the truth about Theodora, Empress of Rome...

**T**all and regal, she wears a magnificent jewelled crown, long pendants of pearls, and necklaces of pearls, emeralds, and rubies. Her purple robes are embroidered with golden thread. Her large, dark eyes regard us with a steady gaze. She is confident, and accustomed to admiration. Her beauty and her iron will have served her well in her progress from actress and courtesan to Empress of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Her brilliant mosaic image, on the right apse wall of the Basilica of San Vitale, in Ravenna, seems to personify the city. It is reproduced on countless travel brochures, coffee mugs, mouse pads and guidebooks. But this royal lady never set foot in Ravenna.

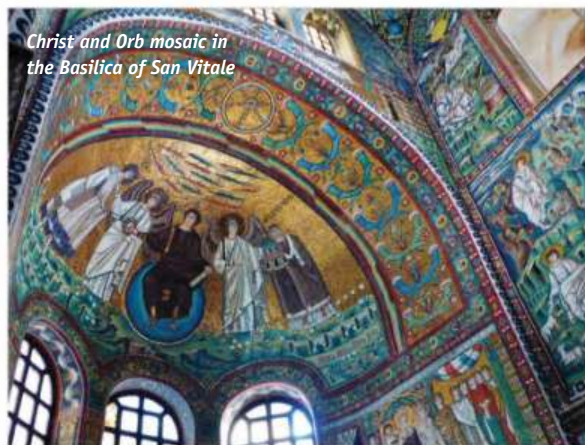
She was Theodora, wife and partner of Justinian I, Ruler of Byzantium. She and her husband commissioned the decoration of San Vitale after Justinian's military commander, Belisarius, wrested control of Ravenna from the Ostrogoths in 540 AD.

In art, great cities are often personified as women; and although Theodora can't properly represent her, we might think of today's Ravenna as a prosperous lady, with many profitable investments: offshore oil and gas production, refineries, chemical plants, and a port supported by a 12-kilometre canal connecting the city to the Adriatic. (Once, long ago, the city fronted the sea; Augustus created the port of Classe there, to shelter his new Roman military fleet. But over the centuries, the sea receded, and Ravenna today is land-locked, except for the canal.





Mosaic panel in the Archbishop's Chapel



Christ and Orb mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale



Agnus Dei mosaic in the apse vault of the Basilica San Vitale

Where the fearsome *triremes* of the Empire once floated, sun worshippers now bask on sandy beaches.)

But in her heart, the historical centre, our wealthy matron harbours jewels of her own, given her by a succession of suitors over centuries of her majestic but perilous life. They are eight historic buildings from Ravenna's past, and the glittering walls, ceilings, domes and arches inside seven of them are Lady Ravenna's shining adornments. These are the early Christian mosaics for which Ravenna is world famous. The eighth building, rather plain in comparison, holds the memory of perhaps her greatest suitor. It is the mausoleum of Theodoric the Great, King of the Ostrogoths.

Not every visitor left Ravenna a gift, of course. In 49 BC, Julius Caesar gathered his forces there before crossing the Rubicon on his way to Rome from Gaul. Perhaps he would have given a token of thanks if he'd not been murdered five years later. A couple of Roman Emperors gave practical gifts, if not exactly romantic ones: Augustus' harbour was very useful, of course, and Trajan built her an aqueduct.

If you come by train, the terminus of the port canal is only a few hundred feet east of the *stazione*, but you won't see it unless you look for it. When we arrived, we headed west toward the *centro storico*. It's a pleasant walk along tree-lined Viale Farini toward Piazza del Popolo, passing the ancient church of San Giovanni Evangelista on the way. The church was commissioned by Galla Placidia, a woman whose rise to power is even more improbable

than Theodora's. We were to visit her mausoleum later, but we couldn't resist strolling in the green and shady park around San Giovanni, musing on Galla's story.

#### THE PURLOINED PRINCESS

Born about the year 390, she was the daughter of Theodosius I, who ruled the Eastern Roman Empire from Constantinople, and half-sister to the Western Roman Emperor, Honorius. This young Imperial Princess happened to be in Rome in 410 when the city was sacked by the Visigoths, led by their king, Alaric, and Galla was among the prizes taken from the city.

However, Alaric had not captured the capital of the Western Roman Empire. Diocletian had earlier made Milan the capital, but Honorius had transferred the seat of government to Ravenna in 402. (Honorius chose Ravenna because the port of Classe gave easy access to Constantinople, capital of the Eastern Empire, and because the swampy western approaches discouraged Barbarian invaders. It turned out that some attackers didn't mind getting their feet wet, but Ravenna managed to remain the capital for three-quarters of a century.)

After Alaric died, Galla evidently conquered the heart of his successor, King Athaulf. They were married in Narbonne, in what is now southern France, in 414, over the objections of Honorius. The abducted Roman Princess became, in effect, Queen of the Visigoths.

The marriage seems to have been a happy one, and Galla may have persuaded Athaulf to support



Above, from top: Altar in the Cappella Arcivescovile – the Archbishop's Chapel; architectural detail in the Archbishop's Chapel; 13th-century mosaic panels in San Giovanni Evangelista Church

#### THINGS TO SEE AND DO

##### MAUSOLEUM OF THEODORIC

Via delle Industrie, 14

☎ +39 0544 684020

[teodorico.ravenna@novamusa.it](mailto:teodorico.ravenna@novamusa.it)

Theodoric built it as his final resting place, but after Ravenna fell to the Byzantines, his remains were removed and the building became a Catholic oratory.

##### ARIAN BAPTISTRY

Vicolo degli Ariani, 1

☎ +39 0544 543711

[sbeap-ra@beniculturali.it](mailto:sbeap-ra@beniculturali.it)

The Baptism of Christ scene, in the cupola, is all that remains of the original decoration. Christ appears as a much younger and less muscular figure than in the Orthodox Baptistry.

##### BASILICA OF SANT'APOLLINARE IN CLASSE

Via Romea Sud, 224

☎ +39 0544 473569

[apollinare.ravenna@novamusa.it](mailto:apollinare.ravenna@novamusa.it)

Even without the breathtaking mosaics that fill the apse and chancel arch, this grand basilica would be impressive, with its round campanile rising from the flat terrain of landlocked Classe, once the busy port that served Ravenna in the city's glory days. Other Sites of Interest

##### DANTE'S TOMB

Via Dante Alighieri, 9

☎ +39 0544 215676

Next to the small temple containing Dante's sarcophagus, there is a garden where you will find a little mound in which Dante's bones were hidden during WWII.

##### DANTE MUSEUM (MUSEO DI DANTE)

Via Dante Alighieri, 4/6

☎ +39 0544 215676

[dantesco@comune.ra.it](mailto:dantesco@comune.ra.it)

Exhibits include memorabilia of the poet, an introductory film and other multimedia presentations in multiple languages.



## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Five of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites are managed by the Opera di Religione della Diocesi di Ravenna. One combined ticket, available at each monument except the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, admits you to all five sites.

**+39 0544 541688**

**info@ravennamosaici.it**

**www.ravennamosaici.it**

### THE MAUSOLEUM OF GALLA PLACIDIA

*Via Argentario, 22*

One of the oldest of the UNESCO monuments, the "mausoleum" may have actually been an oratory for the church of Santa Croce. In any case, Galla Placidia, as Regent for Valentinian, was ruler of the western world, and it was she who had both church and this building erected.

### BASILICA OF SAN VITALE

*Via Argentario, 22*

The octagonal building and the splendid mosaics make San Vitale one of the most beautiful and best preserved examples of Byzantine religious art in the world.

### BASILICA OF SANT'APOLLINARE NUOVO

*Via Di Roma, 52*

The basilica was built as an Arian church some time after 500 AD by Theodoric, and completely decorated with scenes from the life of Christ and of Theodoric's palace and his court. After Byzantine rule began in 540, all traces of Theodoric's court were covered except for a few disembodied hands. The processions of saints and virgins, the Magi, and other figures, are Orthodox and were created around 560.

### NEONIAN BAPTISTRY (ORTHODOX BAPTISTRY)

*Piazza Duomo, 1*

Erected early in the 5th century as the baptistry of the original Cathedral of Ravenna, now rebuilt. The baptistry and its mosaics are, however, mostly original. Compare the dome's central scene, the Baptism of Christ, with the similar scene in the Arian Baptistry made 50 years later.

### ARCHIEPISCOPAL CHAPEL

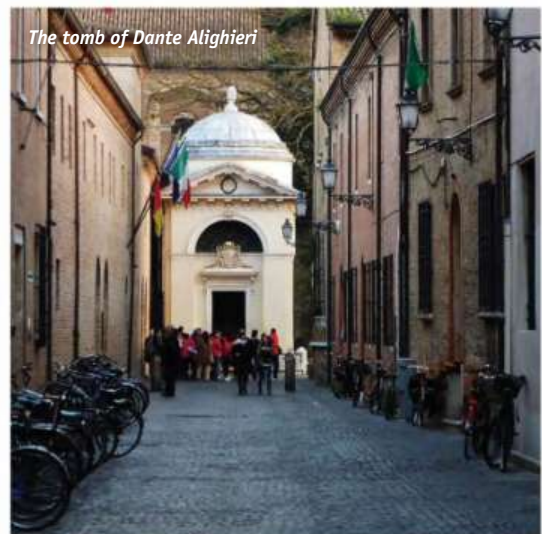
*Piazza Arcivescovado, 1*

Created as the private chapel for Orthodox Catholic bishops during the reign of Theodoric, who was an Arian, the well-preserved mosaics are meant to glorify Christ, in accordance with Catholic belief. They include the famous "Warrior Christ" mosaic in which the Saviour is treading on a snake and a lion. From Psalm 91 – "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder..." The chapel is within the Archiepiscopal Museum, whose prize exhibit is the 6th century ivory throne of Bishop Maximian, the great church builder of Ravenna.

*The blond mermaid in San Giovanni Evangelista Church*



*The tomb of Dante Alighieri*



*Above, from top: La Piazza del Popolo; the mosaic store; il Teatro Alighieri*

Roman rule in Italy with his Gothic troops. However, he was assassinated a year later, and the Goths sent Galla back to Ravenna. There, she reluctantly married the nobleman Flavius Constantius, with whom she had two children – Justa Grata Honoria, and Valentinian. When Constantius became co-emperor with Honorius, Galla was proclaimed "Augusta" – Empress – of the Western Roman Empire. After both Honorius and Constantius died, Galla's son Valentinian became Western Emperor at age six. Galla Placidia ruled the Western Roman Empire as Regent for the next twelve years; and ruled it well. As for her children – well, the adult Valentinian didn't have his mother's strong character, and Justa Grata Honoria, as we shall see a little later, was a world-class problem child.

### A CLUSTER OF GEMS

Ravenna's origins are lost in the mists of prehistory, but the eight buildings that make up Lady Ravenna's famous adornments (and all of them are Unesco World Heritage sites) date from three distinct historic periods, each of them dominated by one extraordinary person. Galla Placidia's colourful personality marked the Imperial age, when the city was the capital of the Western Roman Empire from 402 until the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed in 476.

The second great building period was the reign of Theodoric the Great, King of the Ostrogoths, who ruled

Italy from Ravenna, from 493 to 526. Theodoric admired classical Rome, and sought to maintain Roman civilization in Italy. He was also a follower Arianism, which held that Christ, though divine, as the Son of God was subordinate to God the Father. However, his reign was marked by religious tolerance of both Orthodox Christians and Jews.

The third was the time of Byzantine rule in Ravenna, which fended off the Lombards until the 8th century. The man who showed his love of Ravenna most concretely, in the great churches he made, was an obscure cleric named Maximian who was appointed Bishop of Ravenna by Justinian.

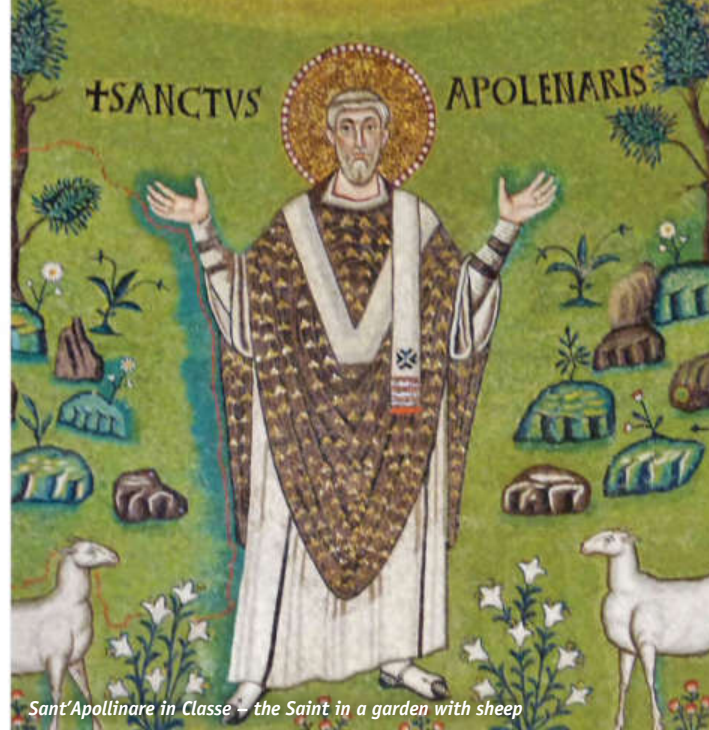
Most of Ravenna's glittering mosaic treasures are strewn around Piazza del Popolo, the heart of historic Ravenna. Our B&B was on Via Guaccimanni, just a few blocks away, so we dropped our bags in our room and headed for the Piazza.

Piazza del Popolo is spacious and attractive, surrounded by handsome historic buildings, including the graceful, arcaded *Palazzetto Veneziano*, dating from the 15th century, when the Venetian Republic ruled the city. Two tall columns remain from the Venetian era. St Apollinare's statue tops one of them; he was the first Bishop of Ravenna as Christianity struggled to survive. There are two great churches named for him, one very near the Piazza, and the other a few miles out of town, in Classe, the ancient port. Both churches are famous for their mosaics.





The flooded crypt of San Francesco Church



Sant'Apollinare in Classe – the Saint in a garden with sheep

The other column once held the lion of St Mark, but it was removed when Venetian rule ended in 1509. The lion was replaced by St Vitale, a popular saint in Ravenna, although nobody seems to know much about him except that he was martyred in the time of Nero and his relics are in the Basilica that bears his name.

St Vitale on his perch reminded us it was time to visit his Basilica. It is the most famous of Ravenna's mosaic treasures, though not the oldest. Construction began under the Ostrogoths, but it was Bishop Maximian who completed and decorated San Vitale. The building is in Byzantine style, not actually a basilica at all. It is octagonal, surmounted by a dome, and with a tall apse containing a high vault and a semi-dome. The central dome is decorated with 18th-century frescoes, but the apse and presbytery are fantasias of Byzantine mosaic: biblical scenes in brilliant greens, blues, and gold dance and shimmer from the arches and lunettes. The apse vault, like the vault of heaven, shows the Agnus Dei, the "Lamb of God", surrounded by a paradise of angels, peacocks, birds, twining acanthus, and garlands of flowers. Christ the Redeemer appears in the semi-dome, seated on a blue orb, symbolizing the universe. San Vitale himself is there, receiving a martyr's crown from Christ's own hand.

On either side of the apse are the iconic portrait scenes of Justinian and Theodora – and Bishop Maximian

himself, beside the Emperor. Scores of other bright scenes dazzle the senses. The church is quite overwhelming, and defies description. (Charlemagne visited Ravenna in 787, and was so impressed that he modelled his Palace Chapel in Aachen after the Basilica of San Vitale.)

Afterward, we stopped into a cosy bar on Via Mariani for coffee. It was empty except for the owner and a friend from the neighbourhood. It was mid-afternoon, and they were sharing some of the morning's pastry, cut into small pieces. "It's too late to sell them," she explained as we leaned on the bar, drinking *caffè lungo* and munching slightly stale brioche. We were still ecstatic about the mosaics, and our new friends were listening politely, when I happened to see the name of the bar reflected in the window of a passing taxi. "Café Dante!" I exclaimed. "Is it far to ...?"

"No," the neighbourhood friend interrupted. "He's very near. There's a big empty tomb in Santa Croce, in Firenze. But we have Dante!"

#### THE PERIPATETIC POET

In 1318, when Dante Alighieri arrived in Ravenna, he was under a death sentence in his hometown, Florence, where he was allied with the wrong political faction, and faced trumped-up charges of embezzlement. He'd been an exile since 1302, and had wandered from city to city, seeking sanctuary. During his exile he began writing his *Commedia*, probably the greatest and most influential poem ever written in

Italian. He finished it in the city that gave him his final sanctuary, Ravenna, and died there in 1321.

In time, the Florentines regretted their treatment of their famous son, and began to demand that Dante's remains be returned to the city of his birth. Ravenna's leaders stoutly maintained that they had earned the right to keep him. In 1519, Pope Leo X (Lorenzo de' Medici's son Giovanni, and therefore a Florentine partisan) ordered Ravenna to return the poet's bones to Florence. When the Florentines arrived to claim them, however, Dante was... gone. The Franciscan Friars, who maintained his very modest tomb in their monastery near the Church of San Francesco, suggested that perhaps Dante preferred to continue his wanderings. In fact, they had hidden the body in another monastery. Later, in 1677, they placed his bones in a wooden casket engraved with his name, and hid it beneath a gateway leading to the garden of a small oratory. Then, it seems, everyone forgot where it was, because it wasn't found again until 1865.

Today, there's a small marble mausoleum near San Francesco church, four blocks from Café Dante. The route passes the Teatro Alighieri, Ravenna's opera house. In the mausoleum, the poet rests in a stone casket inscribed with a Latin epitaph. It ends "...born to Florence, an unloving mother". There is a lamp with a perpetual flame, fuelled by oil donated by Florence every September, in penance.





Apse mosaic in Sant'Apollinare in Classe



Mosaic panel with later inscription



Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, interior view

## INFORMATION

► There are three tourist information (IAT) offices open year round: One, near the monuments in the *centro storico*, is at Piazza Caduti per la Libertà, 2. Another is at Theodoric's Mausoleum, on Via delle Industrie, 14. The third is at the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Via Romea Sud, 226.

► Ask about the Romagna Visit Card, which offers free or reduced admission to many attractions in Ravenna and elsewhere in Romagna – or visit [www.romagnavisitcard.it](http://www.romagnavisitcard.it). If you are interested in learning the art of mosaic, ask about classes – there are several schools of mosaic in town, and you may find a couple of small shops selling tesserae and other supplies.



Arian Baptistery dome

## GETTING THERE

### ► BY TRAIN

Ravenna's train station is a 15-25 minute walk from Piazza del Popolo. Ravenna can be reached by rail from Rome in 3½-4 hours, via Bologna, or from Florence in just over 2 hours, again via Bologna.

### ► BY PLANE

The nearest airports are Bologna, Venice and Rimini. Trains from Bologna arrive in 1 to 1½ hours. By car from Bologna takes 1½ hours, from Venice about 2 hours, from Rimini less than an hour.



Above, from top: Neonian (Orthodox) Baptistery interior with font; Baptistery exterior; Arian Baptistery exterior

## LEVITATING MARTYRS, GOLDEN SKIES, AND OTHER WONDERS

In the morning city bus 4 took us to the old port, and the great Basilica of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, consecrated by Bishop Maximian in 549. The church honours the first Bishop of Ravenna, Apollinare of Antioch, who was martyred in the time of Vespasian. In the apse, the saint stands in a beautiful garden, surrounded by sheep, while behind him in a golden sky, the Transfiguration of Christ is represented by an enormous jewelled cross.

Back in the city is Sant'Apollinare Nuovo church, built by Theodoric and dedicated to Christ the Redeemer. It contains both Arian and Orthodox mosaics. Much of the original Arian decoration was reworked after the Byzantines regained the city, to remove Theodoric and his court from the scene; but there are a few ghostly disembodied hands left here and there. On one wall of the nave, a procession of martyrs seem to float, rather than walk, toward Christ the Redeemer, while on the opposite wall, a file of holy virgins, led by the Magi, glide toward the Madonna and Child.

There are two baptisteries in town, each with elaborate mosaics, and each with a scene of Christ's baptism. The Arian scene depicts a young and beardless Christ, while the Orthodox depiction shows a mature, bearded Saviour. The small Archiepiscopal Chapel, in the Bishop's Palace, contains some of the best preserved early 6th-century

mosaics in the world, still as bright as when their tesserae were first set.

We saved Galla Placidia's Mausoleum for last, perhaps because it is the oldest and most intriguing of the monuments. There are two famous lunettes – one with a lovely depiction of the good shepherd, and the other with St Laurence dancing toward a flaming griddle. Underneath the starry sky of the dome, there are three sarcophagi. One is said to contain the remains of Galla's son, Valentinian, and another those of her half-brother, Honorius. Legend says the third and largest is Galla's final resting place. Scholars say she's not there. I hope they're wrong.

One member of the family is conspicuously missing. Justa Gratia Honoria (usually just called Honoria), Galla's daughter, is not interred in the mausoleum. Early historians related that Honoria was ambitious and a bit promiscuous, and when ordered by the Emperor to marry a rather unpromising nobleman in 450, she sent a letter, and her ring, to Attila the Hun, asking him to come and take her away. Whether or not she promised to marry him, Attila sent to Ravenna demanding Honoria and half of the Western Empire as her dowry. After Emperor Honorius refused his demand, Attila invaded Gaul. He was stopped at the Battle of Châlons in 451. No one knows what happened to Honoria. But that is just one of the secrets Lady Ravenna, like all great ladies, is entitled to keep. ■



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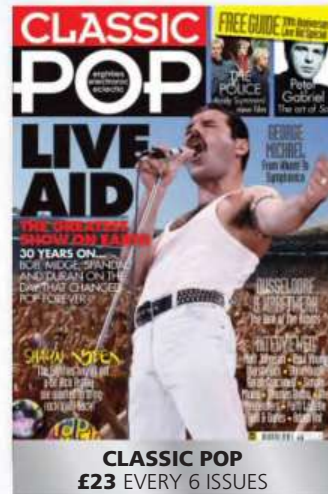
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# Building the Dream

As the winter mud begins to set in, **Jane Smith** and her husband Richard need to prepare their high-traffic outdoor areas for purpose...



Jane Smith runs an estate agency in Le Marche: [www.magicmarche.com](http://www.magicmarche.com). You can contact Jane at: [jane@magicmarche.com](mailto:jane@magicmarche.com). Her husband, Richard, runs a restoration management company: [www.smithpropertyconsultancy.com](http://www.smithpropertyconsultancy.com). You can contact Richard at: [richard@smithprops.com](mailto:richard@smithprops.com)

**T**oday was Gravel Day! It was the 1st of November and finally the mud surrounding the house would be covered by some fine shingle – highly practical and not subject to drought problems in the hot summer. We would also sow a section of lawn, but not until the spring. Two huge lorries arrived, one for the front, one for the back and they tipped their loads. After the loads were dumped, we then raked and moved the gravel into the right areas and levelled the height. The transformation in improving the overall smartness of the house was immense.

Our sunken gas tank arrived the following day, necessary because the house is not linked to the main town gas supply. This is a common system for country houses. Looking like a small submersible it would quickly be buried in the soil by our 'man with the digger' with just the top showing for refilling. There are several suppliers of gas in Italy, all with different tariffs. The tanks are given free by the chosen company and you then have a minimum one-year contract with them. They monitor your consumption centrally and refill at the appropriate time. All remarkably simple.

Our artisan window and door maker, Simone, finished his work in three days; the giant front door was delivered along with the final four external doors, making us totally wind and water tight. Now we could fix our moving-in date. It was just as well that Simone was there on one particular day, as well as our railings man – this was the day our kitchen work top arrived.

We had chosen a semi-matt stone from Tuscany and we hadn't thought to ask how heavy it was, nor how many people we would need on hand to lift the main piece into position. The answer: 400 kilos and six burly men. The mini crane on the lorry lifted the stone to just outside the front door then the six guys man-handled it into place with (lightweight) me as Director of Operations. The main piece would never be moved again, that was for sure, but it certainly did look rather spectacular.

The Smurf arrived for the final touches with our five bathrooms; everything was connected, flushing and draining. I looked forward to my first bath in the new house!

The final two events were the delivery of our balcony railings, lifted into place by a small crane, and the purchase of some plants for my front-door pots.

Wow! Now it really looked like a home and we planned our moving-in date for the 10th November, just 11 months after we moved out. What a testament to our wonderful team. 'Crack open the prosecco Richard. Now we can un-earth the Christmas decorations and plan a great celebration!' ■





*The gardens at Villa Carlotta were begun by Giovanni Battista Sommariva, an 18th-century patron of the arts*

# Gardens of COMO & MAGGIORE

The villas of Lake Como and Maggiore keep some of the prettiest gardens in Italy. **Jane Knightly** travels to and fro, seeking out some of their more unusual flora...

Photography - Jane Knightly



According to the 19th-century French writer Stendhal, "When a man has a heart and a shirt, he should sell the shirt to in order to see Lake Maggiore." As I travelled towards Stresa along the side of the Lake I had to agree with him.

Famed for the beauty of its islands, Maggiore is the second largest of the Italian lakes. Long and narrow, it snakes 40 miles from the Swiss canton of Ticino in the north to Lombardy in the south. The western shore, where the main resorts are, lies in Piedmont.

As I arrived in Stresa I was struck by its old fashioned charm and air of bygone decadence. The Promenade is lined with palatial hotels dating back to the beginning of the last century. These are a legacy of the time when the Simplon Pass was opened, enabling easier access to the Lake and making it a favourite for artists and writers. Indeed, Hemingway was one of the many who visited in 1918 and set some of the scenes of his novel *A*

*Farewell to Arms* in the Grand Hôtel des Îles Borromées. Apart from the grand promenade, Stresa has three main piazzas and cobbled, traffic-free streets full of interesting shops, bars and cafés to explore.

Waking up the next morning and gazing out of my window over the lake towards the Borromean Islands I was filled with anticipation for the day ahead. I was going to visit Isola Bella, Isola Madre and Isola Pescatori; the sun was shining and I had been promised a lunch of fresh fish from the lake. What more could a girl want?

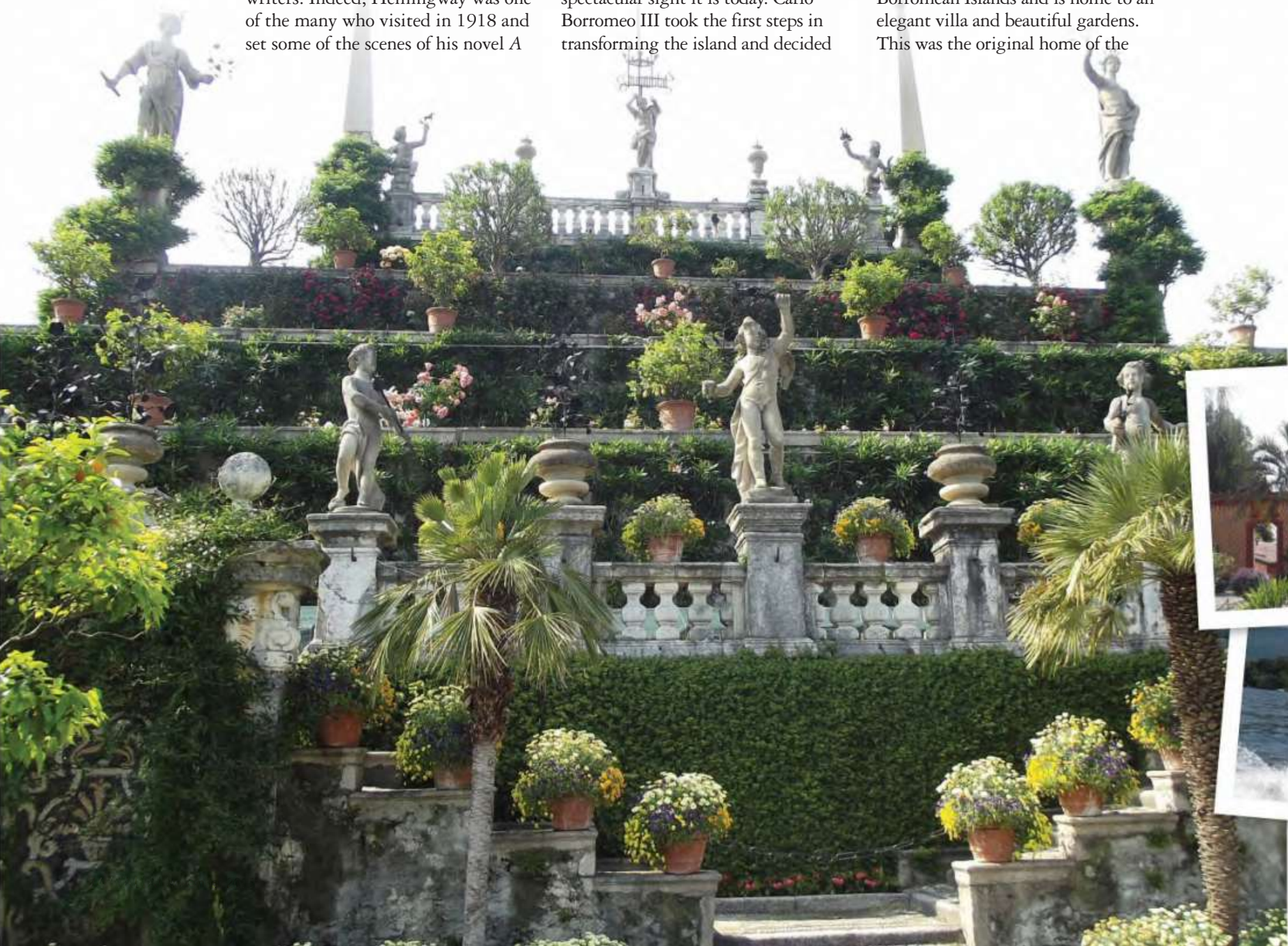
### ISOLA BELLA

The Borromean islands have been owned by the Borromeo family for hundreds of years – although Isola Pescatori belongs to Stresa now. Once a rocky island, home to a small community of fishermen, Isola Bella has been totally transformed into the spectacular sight it is today. Carlo Borromeo III took the first steps in transforming the island and decided

to name it after his wife Isabella – and so it became Isola Isabella, later shortened to Isola Bella. But it was his sons who actually transformed the island. Their vision was that Isola Bella should appear to be a ship sailing across the lake. The island now consists of a very grand palace and magnificent gardens filled with statues and white peacocks. The gardens have ten terraces and include an open air theatre, the Giardino del Amore, the Azalea Garden and an English-style garden full of lotus flowers. At the highest point of the garden there is a huge unicorn, which is the symbol of the Borromeo family. In 2004 the island was the venue for the wedding of Lavinia Borromeo and John Elkann (the grandson of the late Gianni Agnelli and Vice Chairman of Fiat).

### ISOLA MADRE

Isola Madre is the largest of the Borromean Islands and is home to an elegant villa and beautiful gardens. This was the original home of the







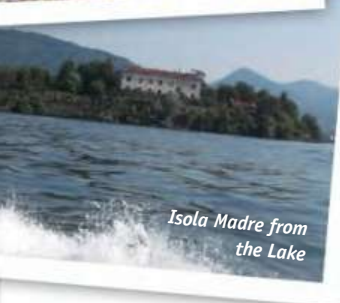
Isola Bella from the Lake



Left and above: Views of the terraces at Isola Bella. Inset: Peacocks on Isola Bella



Isola Madre



Isola Madre from the Lake

family before they planned the grand palace and gardens on Isola Bella. The gardens are well known for the azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias and wisteria. There are also citrus trees, hibiscus and ginkgo biloba. The gardens here are a lot less formal than those on Isola Bella and I liked them better. Outside the entrance to the villa is the largest example of a Kashmir cypress in Europe; it is over 200 years old. In 2006 a freak storm uprooted it and caused an awful lot of damage. A lot of money, time and effort was used to replant it using a crane flown in by helicopter and it is now back in place and seems to be surviving. The villa itself contains a curious collection of marionettes which was also very interesting.

#### ISOLA PESCATORI

Lastly, I visited Isola Pescatori, which has a completely different feel to it from the other two islands and a charm all of its own. There are now 50 residents who live on the island all year

round. The principal occupation of the inhabitants used to be mainly fishing but now their main income is tourism. The quaint old houses are built in such a way as to avoid the flood waters that the island is susceptible to in the autumn and spring. There are many fish restaurants on the island and fortunately I ended up at one of the best ones; eating the freshest fish I have ever tasted and gazing out over the lake where it had come from was a wonderful experience, helped along by the fact that the sun was shining, I was sipping a chilled Italian white wine and I was in great company.

The next day Lake Como was my destination and I was looking forward to exploring Villa Carlotta and its gardens and later on in the day viewing Villa Balbianello from the water.

Lake Como is Italy's deepest lake and is surrounded by high mountains and dramatic cliffs. Famed for its beautiful gardens and historic villas it's easy to see why ➤



Isola Pescatori

#### WHERE TO EAT AND STAY

##### BELVEDERE ALBERGO RISTORANTE

Isola Pescatori, Lake Maggiore

☎ +39 0323 32292

[www.belvedere-isolapescatori.it](http://www.belvedere-isolapescatori.it)

I had a wonderful meal here with fresh fish from the lake. Very friendly staff and an awesome location. Free motor boat transfer after 7pm.

##### THE GRAND HOTEL BRITANNIA EXCELSIOR

Cadenabbia, Lake Como

☎ +39 03440413

[www.hotelbritanniacomovita.com](http://www.hotelbritanniacomovita.com)

I had a lovely meal here and then cocktails on the terrace of the hotel's own lido with its floating swimming pool. Bliss.





*Clockwise from top left: The Carlotta gardens; Villa Carlotta from the Lake; the bamboo garden.*

## GETTING THERE

➤ **Borromean Islands**  
[www.isoleborromee.it](http://www.isoleborromee.it)

➤ **Villa Carlotta**  
Via Regina, 2 – Tremezzo, Como  
☎ +39 0344 40405  
[www.villacarlotta.it](http://www.villacarlotta.it)

Thompson Lakes & Mountains offers a week's stay at:

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Grand Hotel Bristol, from £839 per person (based on two sharing) B&B

➤ **Lake Como**  
Grand Hotel Cadenabbia, from £849 per person (based on two sharing) half board

Grand Hotel Cadenabbia, from £743 per person (based on two sharing) all inclusive

Prices quoted include flights from Gatwick and transfers departing on 16th September 2015. Direct flights available from all major UK airports and Dublin.

[www.thompsonlakes.co.uk](http://www.thompsonlakes.co.uk)  
☎ 020 8939 0740

stars such as George Clooney are attracted to this lake.

## VILLA CARLOTTA

My first point of call, Villa Carlotta, was originally built in 1690 for a noble Milanese family, the Clerici, but was sold to politician and patron of the arts Giovanni Battista Sommariva. He started to develop the gardens and established an art collection which attracted travellers doing the Grand Tour. In the second half of the 19th century Princess Marianne of the Netherlands bought the villa and gave it to her daughter Carlotta. Carlotta's husband was a passionate botanist and together he and Carlotta created the 14 acres of garden that can be visited today. The terraced Italian garden at the front of the villa is very dramatic with fishponds, statues, fountains and tunnels of citrus trees, but it was the sprawling botanical gardens that I liked best. Known for its azaleas and rhododendrons it also has an entire area devoted to bamboo trees. I found

it very cool and restful on a very hot day and enjoyed exploring all the various nooks and crannies of the huge garden. Visiting the villa is also very worthwhile. It is full of a great array of statues and other artistic treasures but the highlight to me was Princess Carlotta's bedroom. It made her seem more of a real person – she sadly died at a very young age.

After another great lunch overlooking the lake I went on a boat trip, which was heaven on a very hot day. As we sped across the lake the guide pointed out various places of interest – villas of the rich and famous, the beautiful little town of Bellagio and the Villa del Balbianello. I didn't get chance to visit it this time but it certainly looked amazing from the water. It will give me a good excuse to come back and visit one of the most beautiful areas in Italy. There are many other great gardens to visit in this area and it is best to spend a week or more here to get the chance to visit them all. ■







WHEN THE KINGDOM OF ITALY signed an armistice with the Allies in 1943, Germany still controlled much of the country, and thousands of Italian soldiers who refused to fight for the Axis were shipped to internment camps outside Italy. One soldier, a 35-year-old journalist named Giovannino Guareschi, was sent to a camp in Poland. On the way, he encountered a Catholic priest named Don Camillo Valota, who had been arrested for aiding Jewish refugees. Valota was on his way to Dachau.

Guareschi survived. The war ended. Back in Italy, he began to write stories about a small town on the River Po, and the town's hot-headed, stubborn, fearless priest, who has an equally obstinate arch-enemy, the town's Communist mayor. Guareschi named the mayor Peppone, and called the priest Don Camillo.

The stories are splendid evocations of post-war rural Italy, and a country struggling to find its place in a changed world. But they are also funny, poetic and wise pictures of imperfect people who manage to be human despite religion and politics. In one memorable scene, Peppone, a little unclear on the Communist concept, infuriates Don Camillo by bringing

## A Little World

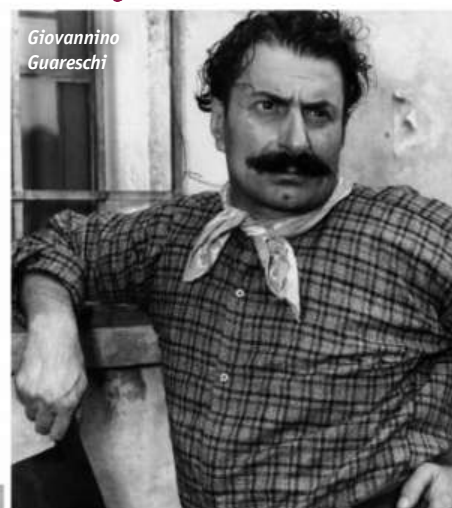
*Giovannino Guareschi wrote stories about a small town on the River Po, and the town's hot-headed, stubborn, fearless priest*

his new-born son to be baptized "Lenin". Don Camillo is instructed in tolerance by frequent conversations with Jesus, in the form of a talking crucifix.

The stories were best-sellers when published in book form. In 1952, the French film director Julien Duvivier made the first of a series of films about the little town on the Po. It was a joint French and Italian production called *The Little World of Don Camillo*, with the great French comedian Fernandel as Don Camillo, and the superb Italian actor Gino Cervi as Peppone. The five films in the series are among the most-loved of Italian movies.

Duvivier chose the atmospheric little town of Brescello, on the banks of the River Po, as the setting for the films. It was an inspired choice. If you visit Brescello, it's like going back to Don Camillo's little world. The talkative crucifix is still in the church, Santa Maria Nascente. Don Camillo's statue blesses the main *piazza*. Peppone doffs his cap across the way. Mementos of the films are in the Peppone & Don Camillo Museum, a former Benedictine monastery. Giovannino Guareschi Park has a bust of the author.

Far away, here in Utah, we recently had Italian visitors, four women travelling together, enjoying the Grand Canyon and other local sights. They insisted on making *spaghetti carbonara* for us and some other friends, so we all gathered in the kitchen. The possible Greek exit from the Eurozone was in the news then, and we talked about the tensions in Europe between the north and south. We talked about the effects of austerity on people's lives, and its similarity to the post-war suffering people endured in Europe, which somehow led to a discussion of social realism in great Italian cinema. Then someone mentioned Don Camillo. "Ah ... Don Camillo," a second voice murmured. "... and Peppone!" a third added happily. I looked around the room. Everyone was smiling. ■



Giovannino  
Guareschi



Don Camillo  
and Peppone  
with the infant  
'Lenin'

### ABOUT THE WRITER

JOE GARTMAN is a freelance writer based in Utah. A passionate amateur of art and history, and an avid traveller, he spends much time in Italy.



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# 4 takes on COFFEE

With the festive season looming fast we return to coffee and its versatility in creating **seasonal treats**. Cakes, cocktails, desserts – a little espresso can go a very long way...







## Festive spiced coffee

### *Caffè aromatizzato alle spezie*

Cardamom is a natural partner for coffee and also works deliciously with orange flower, making this delicately spiced coffee cocktail, perfect for Christmas.

**SERVES 1**

► **Preparation**  
15 minutes

**INGREDIENTS**

**3 cloves**

**4 cardamom pods**

**1 cinnamon stick**

**1 shot espresso**

**a cup of cubed ice**

**30ml dark rum**

**4 drops orange flower essence**

**25ml whipped cream**

**a sprinkling of chocolate powder**

Bash the cloves, cardamom pods and half the cinnamon stick lightly in a pestle and mortar.

Add them to the shot of espresso and leave to steep for 10 minutes.

Add to a cocktail shaker with the ice, the rum and the orange flower essence.

Shake and fine strain (using a fine sieve or tea strainer to catch the spices) into a coffee cup.

Garnish with whipped cream, chocolate powder and the rest of the cinnamon stick.



## Affogato

### *Affogato*

A plain and simple affogato requires just ice cream and espresso. Most variations include some liqueur or other. The recipe below is a little more elaborate yet.

**SERVES 4**

► **Preparation**  
10 minutes

**INGREDIENTS**

**12 soft amaretti biscuits**

**4 tbsp Marsala or dessert wine**

**150ml hot, freshly-made espresso**

**8 scoops coffee or vanilla ice cream**

**10g plain chocolate, finely grated**

Crumble 3 biscuits into the bases of 4 serving glasses.

Pour 1 tbsp Marsala into each glass and leave to soak for about 10 minutes.

Make the espresso coffee.

Place 2 scoops of ice cream into each glass, pour over the coffee and sprinkle with the chocolate. Serve at once.







## Torta Nera

### *Torta Nera*

Dark espresso layers are filled and iced with a chocolate cream in this 'Black Cake'. (Set a day aside for this one.)

**SERVES 8**  
 ► Preparation 4 hours  
 ► Baking 30-35 minutes

INGREDIENTS	
8 tbsps unsalted butter	6 medium free-range eggs
340g plain flour	1 tsp vanilla extract
2 tsp baking powder	FOR THE CHOCOLATE CREAM
½ tsp baking soda	285g granulated sugar
½ tsp salt	170g unsweetened chocolate, chopped
170g cocoa powder, sifted	470ml single cream
230ml freshly made espresso	230ml whole milk
240ml buttermilk	60g cornflour, sifted
230g light brown sugar	½ tsp salt
230g granulated sugar	2 tsp vanilla extract

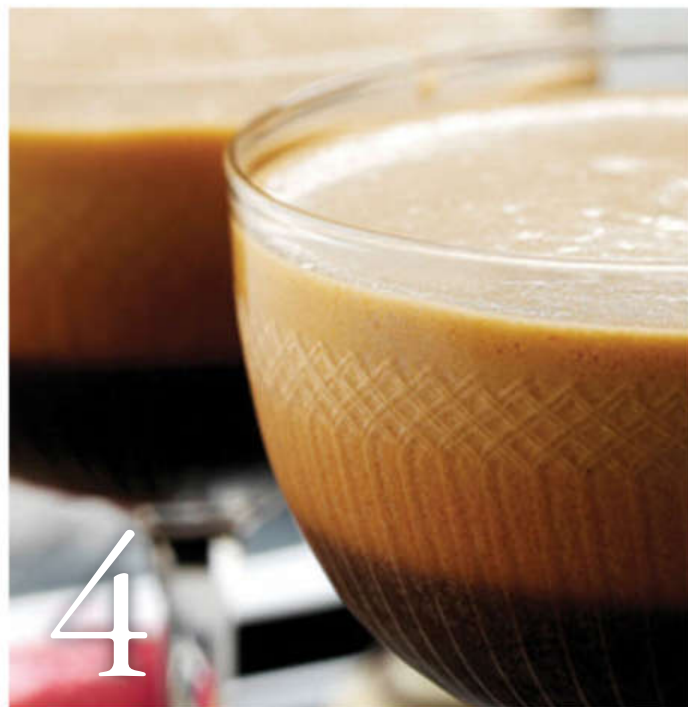
Make the chocolate cream first. Melt the sugar, chocolate, cream, milk, cornflour, and salt in a large pan over a medium heat, whisking constantly, until smooth, shiny and thickened (about 20 minutes). Off the heat, stir in the vanilla. Transfer the to a large bowl, cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours.

Meanwhile, make the cakes. Position an oven rack in the centre of the oven and preheat the oven to 160°C/Gas Mark 3. Grease and flour two 9-inch cake tins and line the bottoms of the tins with parchment paper.

Combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a dry bowl.

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over a medium heat. Stir in the cocoa and cook for about a minute. Off the heat, whisk in the coffee, buttermilk, and both sugars until dissolved. Whisk in the eggs and vanilla extract, then slowly whisk in flour mixture.

Divide the batter evenly between the prepared cake tins and smooth the tops with a palette knife.



## Cherry espresso martini

### *Espresso Martini alle ciliegie*

Cherry vodka is perfect with coffee, bringing out the red fruit notes in many coffees. Kahlua coffee liqueur is a classic match for coffee in cocktails. If you can't find cherry vodka, try this with cherry liqueur instead.

**SERVES 1**  
 ► Preparation 2 minutes

INGREDIENTS	
1 shot espresso	
30ml cherry vodka	
20ml Kahlua	

Shake all ingredients hard over cubed ice. Strain into a coupe or martini glass. Serve

Bake for 30-35 minutes, rotating the cake tins halfway through. Cool the cakes in their tins for 15 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack. Cool completely before icing.

Slice each cake into 2 even layers to create 4 separate layers. Crumble one layer and set aside.

Assemble the remaining 3 layers, with the chocolate cream mixture separating each layer. Using a palette knife, cover the whole cake with the remaining chocolate cream and sprinkle the cake crumbs from the crumbled layer evenly over top and sides, pressing lightly.

Refrigerate until ready to serve. Will keep for 24 hours.



# Italy From The Source

Lonely Planet's **From the Source** series presents authentic dishes direct from the kitchens where they were perfected...

**Thick spaghetti with a pistachio pesto, cardoncelli mushrooms and caciocavallo cheese**

*Spaghettoni con pesto di pistacchi, cardoncelli e fondutto di caciocavallo, by Francesco Abbondanza, L'Abbondanza, Matera*

► **SERVES** 4 ► **PREPARATION** 20 minutes ► **COOKING** 10 minutes

Caciocavallo is a stretched curd cheese that is best when made with milk from podolico cattle.

#### INGREDIENTS

250g spaghettoni

200g caciocavallo cheese (scamorza, ricotta or primo sale are good alternatives)

100ml milk for the cheese sauce

1 tsp of extra virgin olive oil for the cheese sauce

100ml water for the cheese sauce

150g pistachios, plus a few whole to toast

2 tsp extra virgin olive oil for the pesto

150g cardoncelli (or shitake/oyster mushrooms)

2 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil to cook the mushrooms

salt to taste for the pesto and mushrooms

Cut the cheese into 2½cm cubes.

Blend and whip the cheese, milk, oil and water for the sauce to the consistency of double whipped cream.

Take the pistachios, 2 tsp oil and a tiny pinch of salt to 'sweeten the pesto'. Blend to a rough purée.

Dice the mushrooms, heat some salted oil over a medium flame and brown gently.

Boil some salted water for the pasta and cook for around 4 minutes (if fresh spaghettoni), otherwise 6-8 minutes.

In a saucepan, combine the cheese, mushrooms and pesto, and a spoon of water from the pasta, over a low/medium flame to make the sauce.

When the pasta is ready, drain and place in the saucepan and sauté for a minute or two to combine, then serve with some toasted whole pistachios on top.



## Lamb and artichoke stew

*Agnello di masseria con carciofi,*

*by Carmella Carlucci & Gina Saporito, Osteria Monacelle, Ostuni*

► **SERVES 4** ► **PREPARATION 15 minutes** ► **COOKING 1 hour**

From the open kitchen to the communal dining table in its teeny tasting room, Osteria Monacelle in the 'White City' of Ostuni serves up home cooking, Pugliese style. It's renowned for its home-made salumi, its own-label wine and such comfort food dishes as this lamb and artichoke stew.

### INGREDIENTS

*1kg lamb cutlets*

*5 artichokes (one for each person and a bit more for the pot)*

*100g white onion, finely chopped*

*8 bay leaves*

*salt to taste*

*a bottle of prosecco or white wine*

*4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil*

*some sprigs of rosemary to dress the plates*

Clean and peel the artichokes: remove the outer leaves with your fingers to reveal the heart, and chop 2½cm off the bottom of each stem.

Chop off the top third of the flower, where it starts to become green, leaving the yellow/white heart and stem. Peel the stem as you would a carrot and cut the remaining artichoke in half. Then julienne these halves length-ways into 1cm slices. Place the slices into a bowl of vinegar water to keep them from browning while you're working.

Heat up an 'abundant amount' of extra virgin olive oil in a frying pan – enough to coat and cover the artichokes so they don't burn – with some salt and 4 bay leaves.

Add the artichokes and cook for 7 minutes. Leave in the pan with the heat off until the meat is ready.

In a casserole dish or deep frying pan, heat up a small amount of oil, the remaining bay leaves and brown the lamb. Cook the cutlets until they consume any liquid they release, then add the onion and cook until it browns.

Finally, add the wine or prosecco, enough to cover the meat; raise the heat to bring the liquid to the boil for a minute, then lower, cover and cook for 40 minutes.

When the meat is cooked, add the artichokes to the lamb, toss together to combine well, and then serve with some sprigs of rosemary.







## Pappardelle with wild boar and porcini

*Pappardelle al ragù di cinghiale e funghi porcini,*

*by Gina, Paula & Carla Barucci, La Bottega di Volpaia, Chianti*

► **SERVES** 6 ► **PREPARATION** 30 minutes ► **COOKING** 3½ hours

This dish couldn't be more local, the boar hunted in the surrounding Chianti woods, dense with centuries-old chestnut, oak, and fir trees; the mushrooms from local suppliers who bring in their fungi still cloaked in musky earth. The herbs for this dish can be gathered from the bottega's little vegetable garden, but given La Bottega di Volpaia's sheer volume of customers some of these too come from local suppliers, arriving in fat, fragrant bundles that makes the family dog, a big black labrador named Ombra ('Shadow'), twitch from nose to tail.

### FOR THE RAGÙ

*olive oil*

*1 carrot*

*1 red onion*

*1 celery stick*

*1kg wild boar*

*300g minced beef, to make it less gamey*

*500ml red wine*

*5-10 bay leaves*

*800g fresh porcini mushrooms*

*3 or 4 garlic cloves*

*1kg tomato passata*

*salt and pepper to taste*

### FOR THE PASTA

*600g '0' flour (strong bread flour)*

*5 whole eggs*

*a pinch of salt*

For the ragù, cut all the vegetables into 1cm pieces. Put them in a pan with olive oil. Brown all the vegetables.

Mince all the meat or chop to a mince-like size, add to vegetables and brown.

Put all the red wine in and cook until it evaporates. Don't boil – cook low enough for it to slowly vanish.

Add the bay leaves, mushrooms, roughly chopped garlic and tomato passata, bring the flame down, cover and cook for at least three hours. Salt and pepper to taste.

For the pasta, sift the flour onto a clean work surface and make the flour into a volcano (a mound with a well).

Break the eggs into it and a pinch of salt. Combine and bring the mixture into a ball.

Knead well, like you're working bread. Push the dough away from you with the heel of your hand, fold it over itself, turn and continue until the dough is smooth and elastic – about 5 minutes.

Rest for 30 minutes in a cool place (or fridge), wrapped in cling film (plastic wrap).

The rolling out is easiest done with a pasta-maker – otherwise on a floured surface, with a rolling pin – to no more than 1mm thick. You should be able to see your fingers through it.

Cut into 2cm ribbons and add to boiling, salted water. Fresh pasta cooks quickly, so test to see if it is *al dente* after just 3 or 4 minutes. Once cooked through, drain and ladle the sauce over the top.



# Grilled tuna strips with octopus and lemon

*La stigghiola, by Tony de Coco, I Pupi, Bagheria*

➤ **SERVES** 4 ➤ **PREPARATION** 10 minutes ➤ **COOKING** 10 minutes

This twist on a classic Sicilian street food recipe, made with tuna rather than lamb, is the creation of pioneering chef Tony Lo Coco at newly awarded Michelin-star restaurant, I Pupi, in the Sicilian seaside town of Bagheria. "I make this variant of *stigghiola* with squid, cuttlefish or octopus, tuna, spring onion and parsley," says Tony. "It's been a real success."

## INGREDIENTS

160g tuna fillet

60g octopus

(use squid or cuttlefish as alternatives)

1 spring onion

1 small bunch of parsley

salt, lemon and extra virgin olive oil

Slice the octopus into long strips about 2½cm wide, and beat/flatten with a meat hammer until tender, and 2mm thick.

Cut the tuna fillet into long strips, about 2½cm squared, lay strips of julienned spring onion and parsley leaves on one side, and then wrap with strips of octopus.

Heat a non-stick skillet or frying pan (or fire up the BBQ), and sear the *stigghiola* on both sides for three or four minutes, then drizzle with olive oil, salt and lemon. Slice into bite-sized pieces and serve.

## INFORMATION

➤ *Italy: From the Source* Sarah Barrell and Susan Wright, Lonely Planet, £17.99 hardback, [shop.lonelyplanet.com](http://shop.lonelyplanet.com)





# Pronto!

Some of the more complex Italian recipes will take hours to prepare – and just as long to enjoy! – but when you're in a hurry you're going to need quick-and-easy meals to cook. *Italia!* presents five vegetarian favourites...



## Red onion and ricotta tart

### *Torta di cipolle rosse e ricotta*

Many people in the UK grow red onions nowadays and there are lots of them in storage at this time of year. It's been a good year for onions.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 5-10 minutes
- **COOKING** 50 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

130g shortcrust pastry  
(to fit a tin 15cm in diameter)  
butter, for greasing

#### FOR THE FILLING

2 medium red onions, peeled  
45ml olive oil  
30ml balsamic vinegar  
2 tbsp caster sugar  
1 free-range egg  
150g ricotta  
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Use a mandolin, or a sharp knife, to very finely slice the onions width-wise into rings. Place the onions on a foil-lined baking tray, sprinkle with olive oil, balsamic and sugar, then mix well and place in the oven for 20-25 minutes.

In the meantime, heavily butter the pastry tin, roll the shortcrust pastry out to about 5mm thick, and use it to line the tin. Trim the edge off the sides, then line the inside with parchment paper and cover with ceramic beans. Blind bake in the oven for 15 minutes.

In a bowl, beat the egg with the ricotta, then add the onions and season. Spoon the mixture into the pastry case, place the tart onto a baking tray and cook in the oven at 190°C/Gas Mark 5 for around 25 minutes or so. Serve warm.



## Spinach soufflé with sun-dried tomatoes and goats' cheese

### *Sformatini di spinaci con caprino*

Spinach grows all year round in milder regions of the UK and is very nutritious – even if it has been frozen.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 15 minutes
- **COOKING** 35 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

250g spinach,  
coarsely chopped

1 medium onion,  
peeled, finely sliced

1 tbsp chopped rosemary

1 free-range egg

1 tbsp double cream

6 sun-dried tomatoes,  
chopped

100g goats' cheese, cubed

salt and freshly ground  
black pepper

½ tsp ground nutmeg

30g unsalted butter

30g Parmesan or Grana  
Padano, finely grated

#### FOR THE SALAD

250g cooked beetroot

1 tsp balsamic vinegar

1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil

2 tbsp pumpkin seeds

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6, then butter four small ramekins. Fry the onion with a little oil, then add the spinach and rosemary, and cook for 5 about minutes.

Blitz, then add the egg, cream, sun-dried tomatoes, goats' cheese, salt, pepper and nutmeg, and mix well. Transfer to the ramekins, dividing evenly. Dot each with butter and Parmesan. Place in the oven for around 30 minutes.

For the salad, cut the beetroot into large dice, toss with vinegar and oil, then mix in the pumpkin seeds.

Turn out the *sformatini* and place upside down on a plate with the salad on the side.





## Orecchiette with lemony ricotta, peas and mint

### *Orecchiette con ricotta, limone e piselli*

Orecchiette ('Little Ears') are the perfect shape for collecting the ricotta and peas in this sauce. In fact, this dish wouldn't really work with any other type of pasta.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 5 minutes
- **COOKING** 10-15 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

200g orecchiette  
the zest and juice of 1 lemon  
100g ricotta  
80g peas  
40g Parmesan or Grana Padano, grated  
a handful of mint leaves, washed

Bring a saucepan of water to the boil, add the orecchiette and cook for 10-15 minutes according to packet instructions, until *al dente*.

Cook the peas in a saucepan of salted boiling water for 2-3 minutes, then drain.

Beat the ricotta with the lemon juice and zest, stir in the Parmesan and mint, then the peas.

Drain the orecchiette, return to the saucepan and stir in the ricotta mixture. Serve immediately.



## Savoury crumble with figs, dolcelatte and courgettes

### *Crumble di zucchine, fichi e dolcelatte*

Dolcelatte ('Sweet Milk') is a blue-veined soft cheese from Lombardy. You can find it in supermarkets in the UK, though a very mild Stilton-style cheese could be substituted.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 10 minutes
- **COOKING** 30 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp olive oil  
500g courgettes  
50g fresh white breadcrumbs, finely crumbled from day-old bread  
30g unsalted butter, cubed  
40g Parmesan or Grana Padano, grated  
1 tbsp thyme leaves, removed from the branches  
125g dolcelatte  
2-3 figs

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Wash then chop the courgettes into 5mm rounds. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and add the courgettes. Lower the heat, place a lid on the pan and leave to cook for 5 minutes. Remove the lid and cook for further 5-10 minutes until tender and the juices have mostly evaporated.

In a bowl combine the breadcrumbs, butter, thyme and Parmesan, rubbing with your fingers to create a crumble.

Spread the courgettes over the base of a baking dish, then cut or crumble the dolcelatte over the top. Slice the figs and lay them on top of the courgettes. Top with the crumble mixture, and place in the oven for 20 minutes, until lovely and golden. Serve with delicious crusty bread and a simple salad.



## Portobello mushrooms stuffed with red rice

### *Funghi ripieni di riso rosso selvatico*

Mushrooms and rice make for some great comfort food recipes in autumn, which is also when pomegranates are in season, in Italy at least.

- **SERVES** 2
- **PREPARATION** 5-10 minutes
- **COOKING** 45 minutes

#### INGREDIENTS

4 large Portobello mushrooms	the zest and juice of ½ a lemon
70g riso rosso selvatico	2 tbsp olive oil
30g Parmesan or Grana Padano, grated	20g pine nuts
50g mascarpone	salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 small red onion, peeled, finely chopped	FOR THE SALAD
1 small handful parsley, finely chopped	80g rocket
	pomegranate seeds
	1 tbsp olive oil
	1 dsp balsamic vinegar

Preheat the oven to 220°C/Gas Mark 7. Cook the rice for around 30 minutes according to packet instructions, until *al dente*. In the meantime, dry toast the pine nuts in a frying pan and set aside. Fry the onion in a separate frying pan containing 1 tsp olive oil, for 4 minutes until lightly coloured. Mix the Parmesan and mascarpone together in a bowl, then add the lemon zest and juice, toasted pine nuts, onion and parsley. Drain the rice and stir into the mixture.

Remove the stalks from the mushrooms, toss the mushrooms in the remaining oil and season. Lay them in a baking tray, gills facing upwards. Spoon the mixture into the caps and bake for 15 minutes.

While the mushrooms cook, wash the rocket and make a simple dressing using the olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Sprinkle the rocket with pomegranate seeds, then drizzle with the dressing just before serving. Serve the mushrooms with the salad on the side.



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# RED WINES OF SICILY & SARDINIA

The two major Italian islands produce some stunning red wines, spanning all price levels. **Paul Pettengale** discovers some of the best tipples the islands have to offer...

**T**he islands of Sicily and Sardinia have an extremely long history of wine production. Sicily was perhaps one of the first civilized parts of what would become Italy, with a population called Sicilian dating back some 5,000 years. The Phoenicians then turned up and created ports and areas of commercial activity. Then the Greeks arrived, dominating the islands from around 800 to

*Sicily has the largest area of vineyards per capita of any region in Italy*

300BC. And it was the Greeks who brought with them the vines that would grow the grapes that would in turn be used to make wine. Today, Sicily has the largest area of vineyards per capita of any region in Italy. Wine is big business here, especially robust reds and Marsala, the dessert wine; though, interestingly, the Sicilians actually drink rather less wine than the Italians on the mainland.

Sardinians love both their red and their white wines. White grape varieties do well because of the cooling sea breeze that seems to constantly blow; though – especially in the centre of the island, away from the coast – red varieties thrive as well. In this issue of *Italia!* we sample red wines from both Sicily and Sardinia. Turn the page to see how they compare...





## NERO D'AVOLA/ FRAPPATO 2014, INYCON

From Waitrose  
(and other supermarkets)  
[www.waitrose.com](http://www.waitrose.com)

Price £5.99 (was £7.99)  
Nero d'Avola dominates the red grape varieties of Sicily, though it's big, bold and very robust. So the co-operative Inycon has innovated and blended it with the fragrant and softer Frappato variety to produce a nicely rounded wine. The cherry and damson fruit aromas combine well; it's medium to big bodied in the mouth (it has quite a backbone), but not at all over-powering. The finish isn't the longest, but this is a rare, easy-drinking red.

## NERO D'AVOLA TERRE SICILIANE 2012, COROLLA

From Majestic  
[www.majestic.co.uk](http://www.majestic.co.uk)  
Price £8.99 (see text)

Another Sicilian wine, and yes, another one that uses (100 per cent this time) the Nero d'Avola grape variety. It's dark purple in colour, inky almost, and possesses aromas of blackcurrants, blackberries and black cherries (there's a black theme going on here), though in the mouth it's fairly soft, fruity and vibrant – certainly a lot less to tackle than the aromas would suggest. And if you buy two bottles at a time from a Majestic store (or online), you get 20 per cent off the price.

## BARROSU CANNONAU DI SARDEGNA RISERVA 2012, GIOVANNI MONTISCI

From Berry Bros. & Rudd  
[www.bbr.com](http://www.bbr.com)

Price £30.00  
Good lord! As well as having one of the longest names in the history of wine, this red from Sardinia is also one of the strongest, at 15.5 per cent ABV. Don't knock this back on an empty stomach! Not that you would... As you'd miss out on the opulence and structure of a truly fine wine. One with poise, balance and ample forest fruit combined with the essence of the Sardinian sun.

## SANTA CECILIA 2010, PLANETA

From Carluccio's  
[www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)  
Price £21.00

Wine lovers the world over will be familiar with the Planeta company. It's synonymous with Sicily and owns several vineyards dotted all over the island. You haven't lived if you haven't sampled its Fiano-based Cometa! This wine, however is red – very red – being made using Nero d'Avola. Dark and complex it has extraordinary tannins (subtle, though strong) and is rich in forest fruit and a flavour that reminds us of fig jam. This 2010 vintage could age yet, but is drinking well now.



### GREAT WITH...

Either a big bowl of pasta with a meat ragù or, if you will, a roast chicken.



### GREAT WITH...

Bash out some rump steak, pan fry, stick it in some ciabatta bread. Enjoy.



### GREAT WITH...

Ask your butcher for a haunch of venison. You'll have to order in advance.



### GREAT WITH...

Lamb! Either chops, roasted leg or slow-roasted shoulder of the beast!



### CARIGNANO DEL SULCIS RISERVA 'ROCCA RUBIA' 2012, CANTINA SANTADI

From Great Western Wine  
[www.greatwesternwine.co.uk](http://www.greatwesternwine.co.uk)  
Price **£19.95**

Our favourite red wine from Sardinia? Terre Brune from the Santadi co-operative. But it's expensive (£38 a bottle from GWW). Rocca Rubia is hardly a 'baby brother', more of a maturing teenager, with a rich nose and a creamy palate, an abundance of fruit and a powerful kick. This wine is Sardinia in a glass, and demands to be drunk with traditional Sardinian dishes (see below, apologies in advance). Give it a try!



#### GREAT WITH...

Buy a suckling pig, stick it on a spit and slow-roast it over and open barbecue.

### ISOLA DEI NURAGHI NEROMINIERA CARBONIA 2011, ENRICO ESU

From Berry Bros. & Rudd  
[www.bbr.com](http://www.bbr.com)  
Price **£15.95**

Some of the vines that produce the Carignano grapes that go into this wine date back to 1958. They're planted near an old coal mine (hence the Nerominiera name), and the soil there is particularly sandy. As you'd expect, the wine is dark and dense; a real 'glass stainer', if you will. It boasts remarkably intense dark cherry and blackberry aromas and a strong yet likeably fresh raspberry finish. Great value for money.



#### GREAT WITH...

A nicely marbled rib-eye steak, griddled polenta and garticky French beans.

### CERASUOLO DI VITTORIA DOCG 2013, PLANETA

From Carluccio's  
[www.carluccios.com](http://www.carluccios.com)  
Price **£12.95**

If the Santa Cecilia is a bit rich for you, both in terms of cost and style, then you should try our chosen alternative from Sicilian wine producer Planeta. It's a lot softer, is a touch more 'floral' about its aroma and features red cherry tastes rather than dark. That said, it packs a punch and you can really tell that the grapes have been slowly ripened in the hot Sicilian sun. Planeta offers many, many wines, but this is one of our favourites when it comes to the company's reds.



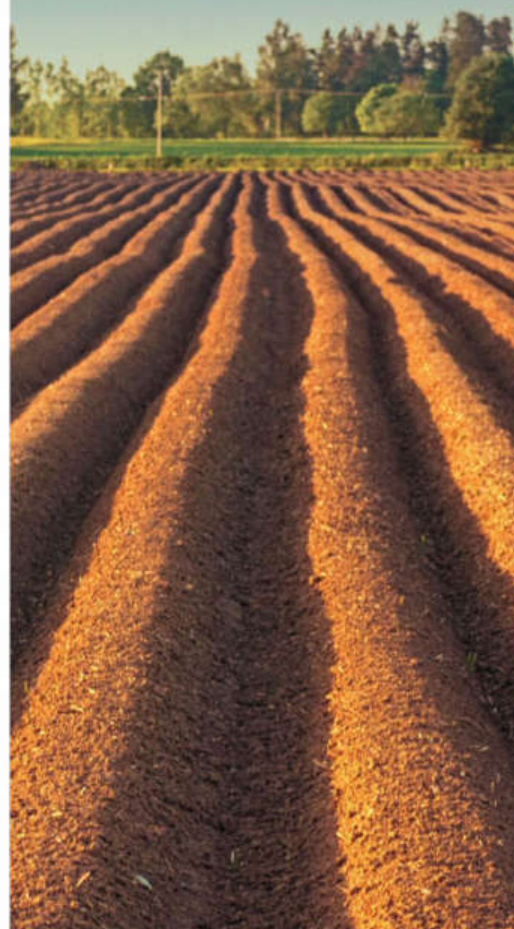
#### GREAT WITH...

Have fun and make your own pizza with a crispy dough base.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SOIL AND SUN

There is a distinct difference between the red wines of Sicily and Sardinia. And it's not just down to the grape varieties that are grown on the respective islands (well, it is, but there's a reason for that...). Sicily has a turbulently volcanic history and therefore favours grape varieties that thrive in volcanic soil types. Nero d'Avola in particular. Sardinia, on the other hand, has largely sandy soils which the Cannonau and Carignano vines take to particularly well. Sicily is also (typically) hotter, especially during the summer months when the grape are ripening, so the concentrations of sugars are higher.

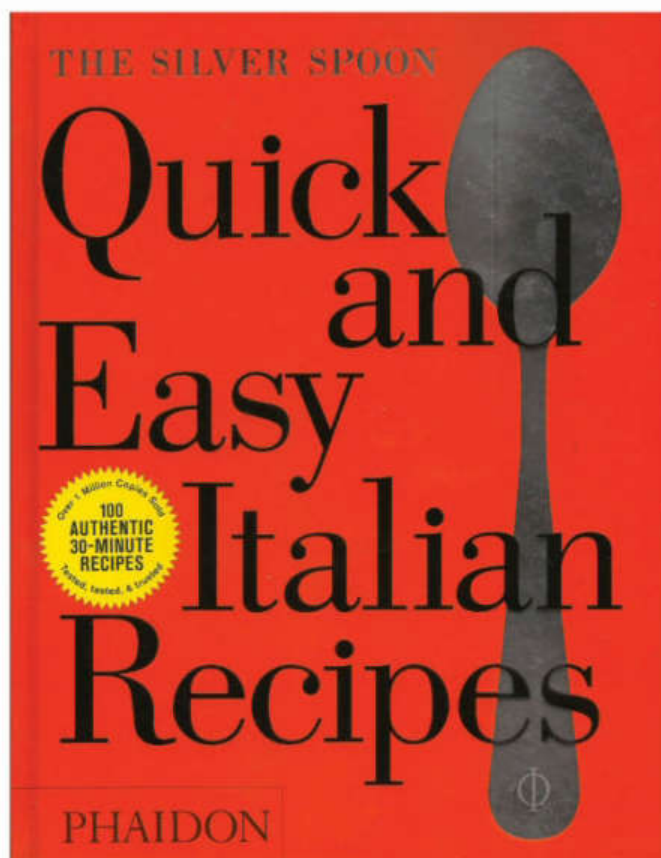
*Sicily favours grape  
varieties that thrive in  
volcanic soil types*





# IN PRINT

This month we sample simple recipes from *The Silver Spoon*, we read about a **witch who lives on Lipari** and then we indulge in our Mod-boy fantasies by hopping on the back of a collection of scooters...



## ◀ THE SILVER SPOON QUICK AND EASY ITALIAN RECIPES

Phaidon, £19.95 (hardback)

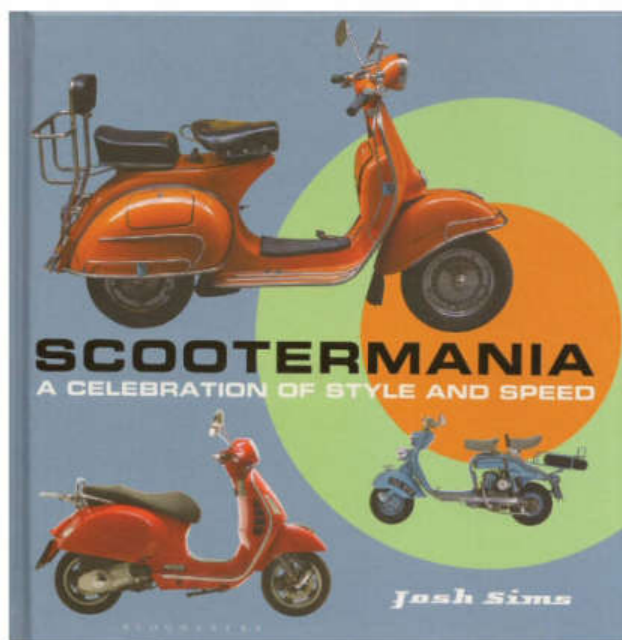
Ten years ago Phaidon, the book publishers, translated *The Silver Spoon* into English. A huge collection of Italian classic recipes, it went on to become the best-selling Italian cookbook (in the English language) of all time, selling more than a million copies. Every lover of Italian cookery should have a copy! This month the publisher has released a further collection of 100 recipes, though these have all been constructed to be cooked in 30 minutes or less. The recipes vary in terms of the levels of expertise required, though none are intimidating, and they certainly offer more than a quickly chucked-together pasta and sauce. Buy it and you'll learn how to cook the likes of beef tenderloin with fava beans, spicy broccoli with yoghurt, chicken and celeriac salad, and ham and sage frittata. As you would expect, each recipe is illustrated with high-quality photography and each is presented in a precise and easy-to-follow manner. Look out for an extract from *The Silver Spoon: Quick and Easy Recipes* in a forthcoming issue of *Italia!*

## ONTRETO ▶

Peter Crawley,  
*Matador*,

£9.99 (paperback),

The tiny island of Lipari, near Sicily, is the backdrop to the latest crime thriller from author Peter Crawley. "A story of political oppression, betrayal and escape," it explores the dark secrets of this seemingly idyllic Mediterranean destination. Crawley spent five summers on the island researching the book, and his depth of accumulated knowledge really shows. Pacey, though stretching to over 400 pages, it's a ripping tale. Oh, and it includes a local witch.



## ▲ SCOOTERMANIA

Josh Sims, Conway/Bloomsbury, £14.99 (hardback)

Judging by the number of photographs we receive from you, the *Italia!* readers, for our monthly Readers' Photos pages, we'd be justified in suggesting that you're obsessed with the Vespa. And so is Josh Sims, as demonstrated by his book *Scootermania*, 'a celebration of style and speed' (not that they actually go very fast). He traces the history of the scooter from the battlefields of the Second World War, though its starring roles in movies such as *Roman Holiday* and *Quadrophenia*, and then through the various models of scooter that have defined this oh-so popular mode of transport. The book also includes interviews with designers, manufacturers and the riders who have made the scooter famous worldwide.



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# ITALY FLIGHT GUIDE

Let *Italia!*'s flight guide take the hard work out of **planning your trip**. Just pick your ideal destination from our handy map of Italy and locate the corresponding number from the list.

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	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
<b>4 Bergamo</b>	Bristol	Ryanair
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
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	Shannon	British Airways
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# ITALIA! ICONS



Today, some 50 companies use the Artistic Glass Murano® trademark of origin, a guarantee of authenticity. (Not all factories on the islands use the mark, however – just because a piece does not carry the mark, does not mean it is definitely not from Murano).

## #04

### MURANO GLASS

The Venetian islands of Murano are home to a number of glass makers whose wares are known the world over for their intricacy and incredible colours...

Venice was already associated with glass making long before the industry was moved to the island group of Murano, with technique and styles coming to the city from Greece, Turkey and beyond. However, given the intense heat involved in the glass making process, the Venetian authorities feared fires at a time when many of the city's houses were made of wood, and so in 1291 all Venetian glass makers were ordered to relocate their foundries to Murano, a mile from central Venice.

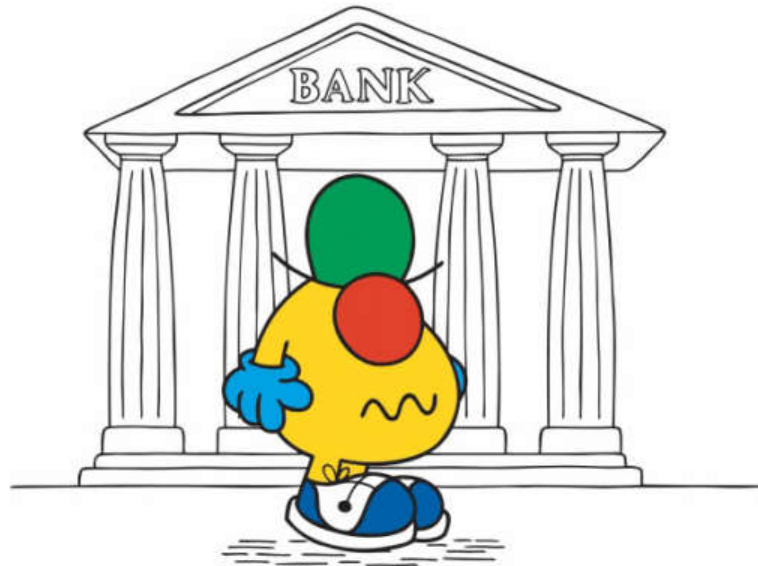
It was the glass makers of Murano who made the glass chandeliers popular in the early 1700s. The *ciocca* chandelier (the word translates as 'tuft', as in of hair) became hugely fashionable – as well as extremely expensive – and came to adorn many of the grand *palazzi* across Venice. The chandeliers by Giuseppe Briati were particularly sought after. Built around a metal frame, both transparent and coloured hand-blown 'tufts' were mounted before the chandelier was hung.

Today Murano glass features in many shops across the city, though you're unlikely to find a chandelier to pack in your suitcase – rather items of jewellery and baubles for the decoration of Christmas trees. Though do be careful – even these are incredibly fragile! ■



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